

Jane A Worth
ATHELWOLD:
TRAGEDY.

As it is acted at the
THEATRE-ROYAL
IN
DRURY-LANE,
BY HIS
MAJESTY'S Servants.

By **AARON HILL, Esq;** *K*

D U B L I N :

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For **ABRAHAM BRADLEY** at the *Golden-Ball* and
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M, DCC, XXXII.

ALFRED, LORD

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DURHAM LANE



M. A. J. Y. S. S. S. S.

BY ALFRED, LORD

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Edited by J. P. S. S. S.

For ALFRED, LORD, at the Theatre Royal,
Durham Lane, in London.
M. DCC. LXXXII.



PREFACE to the READER.

IF there is any thing, in my Writings, that deserves to be remember'd, They will *live* without Patronage: If They ought to be forgotten, They wou'd *die*, in spite of Protection. So I commit them to the World, unsustain'd by *Dedication*. — No Patron's Authority can protect a *bad* Work. — And a *good* one can want no Protection.

I am afraid, we need look no farther, than the *Dedications* of our poetick Writings, for the Source of that *Neglect*, which the *Art Itself*, complains of. — While Poetry preserv'd its Honesty, it was consider'd with Distinction; But, when it degenerated into a Traffick, between *Praise* and *Reward*, it became despis'd, like the Gold of *Utopia*, not by Ignorance of its Value, but through scorn of the Use, It was put to.

Before I speak of the following Tragedy, I am oblig'd to take Notice of another, the first Dramatick Sally of my Youth: And which, I shou'd be asham'd to confess, I had the Folly to begin and finish in a Week, but that I have Occasion, from that Confession, to hope Pardon of its Faults; and admire the *English Good-nature*, which receiv'd it, with undeserv'd Indulgence.

— It was written on the same Subject with *This*, (upon Mr. Booth's recommending it to my Choice.) It was, also, acted at the same Theatre; and is, still, a Living Evidence, against me, under the Name of *Elfrid*; or, the *Fair Inconstant*.

PREFACE to the READER.

As I knew nothing of the Rules of Writing, the Play was, consequently, an unprun'd Wilderness of Fancy, with here and there, a Flower, among the Leaves; but without any Fruit, of Judgment. — I know not how it came to pass, that *Athelwold*, even in That Piece, deserv'd some little Pity: But, I am afraid, I was too dull a Painter, to hit a Likeness for the Ladies.

—— *Elfrid* suffer'd more, by my ill Conduct, than Her own; and was a lighter *Inconstant*, than the Histories of those Times have shown her: And, as for *Edgar*, The Monarch came out of my Hands, as one of his Successors, out of the Arch-Duke of *Austria's*; strip'd of Every Thing that became his Condition, and only a King in his Title.

I therefore consider'd myself as not deserving Pardon, from the Publick, till I had purchas'd it, with something, *Better*, on the same Subject. — This was the Original of *Athelwold*.

The new Play has neither Thought, Design nor Expression, in the least, resembling the Old one; and my only Reason, for troubling the Reader with this little Story, is, because, shou'd there be any Thing in the second Attempt, greatly preferable to the First, it will be a *Proof*, that Fancy, (for, to say *Genius*, wou'd be making bold, with what is none of my own,) wants the Aid of the Judgment; and shou'd have Regard to the *Rules*, of an Art, which, like Religion, had an Orthodox Establishment; but (like that too) has been warp'd, and weaken'd, by mysterious Dulness, and the dry Pride of Commentators.

I am unable to execute any thing in Poetry, if I have *wasted* the Care, I bestow'd on this Tragedy: — Nor can I have so unjust an Opinion of the Publick Taste, (tho' I think Nobody will celebrate it, for Poetry,) as not to know, that shou'd there be Merit in *Athelwold*, there are Spirits, in the Nation, who have Influence and Generosity, to awaken others into their Sentiments. — I say this, for the sake of the *Stage*; for, as to myself, the Distinction of Deserving to be *Read*, is all the Advantage I propose from my Writings.

A. HILL.



PROLOGUE.

Spoken by Mr. *WILKS*.

OUR Author's Wishes, partial to the Stage.
Not for himself, your Favour wou'd engage :
Not his own Cause, but ours, he wou'd defend,
Nor fears an Enemy — nor tasks a Friend :
But, frankly bids me own, that from his Plays,
He means no Profit, and deserves no Praise.

Yet, has he one fond Passion to impart ;
One favourite Weakness, that has warm'd his Heart !
Constant, he doats on a declining Fair ;
Yet, recommends his Mistress to your Care ;
Tho' past her Bloom, still tempting she appears,
A mid-ag'd Matron, — of three thousand Years !
Slight not Dame Tragedy, — nor fancy, Sirs,
That Pain, and Spleen, and Age, alone, are hers :
Old, as you think her, still, she moves, and warms,
Smiles thro' the Soul, and swells the Heart with Charms.
But the vain Prude, too coy, to yield, at Pleasure,
Vows, she'll be wedded, — or withhold her Treasure.
Take her, to Wife ; — the Match could ne'er be wrong.
But, for one Quality — she'll live too long.

Could, ye, for once, forgive the serious Strain,
And bear a useful Truth, undress'd, and plain ? —
Fain wou'd the Muse remind you, that the Stage
Receiv'd most Honour, from the wisest Age.
Athens shone brightest, when the crowded Scene
Fir'd her bold Sons, — to dare, — to act, to mean !

PROLOGUE.

*Greatly, to copy the departed Great,
And be the Chiefs, they learnt to emulate.
Warm'd, by this Heat, which to their Plays they ow'd,
The guided Passions of a People glow'd:
High beat their cherish'd Hearts, in Glory's Cause;
Firm stood their Freedom, and long liv'd their Laws:
Charm'd into Virtue, and by Pleasure taught,
The raptur'd Youth, the meant Impression caught,
Grew up to Greatness, Liberty and Arts,
And snatch'd the Heroe's, from the Player's Parts.*

*Oh! cou'd we live, to hail the future Day,
When sparkling Folly shall give Genius way;
When low, light, Scenes shall tempt the Eye, in vain;
And Passion's Power impress the Heart, again;
Then shall the Muses, like their Monarch, smile,
And all Heaven's Blessings crown his happy Isle!*

EPILOGUE.

Spoken by Mrs. BOOTH.

THIS whining Tragedy has made me hoarse,
Yet, as an Epilogue's a Thing of course,
I can't help telling ye, before we part,
I'm glad my Husband's dead, with all my Heart:
That's one Confession, ——— and one more shall be,
I wish the Author were as dead as he:
His murdering Muse, in downright Love of teizing,
Kills one, for being pleas'd, and one, for pleasing:
Stabs Ethy — 'cause her Love was an untrue one,
Drowns my good Man, because he lik'd a new one:
Lud! Lud! — what Work 'twou'd make amongst the Fair;
Shou'd every Belle be drown'd, that loves a Pair:

And,

EPILOGUE.

*And, as for Beaux, — who make no Bones of erring,
They'd fill the Seas, all round, like Shoals of Herring!*

*A fine Example, truly! don't it move ye?
Were it well follow'd — how 'twou'd soon improve ye!
Send ye, in Pairs, to Heav'n, where good Folks Trust is,
Martyrs, Lord help ye! of Poetic Justice!*

*I, for my Part, had a sweet Race to run,
I, — not to be a Queen, — must be a — Nun!
No, Ladies, have a care of that: — The Poet
Belies the Story, — and, thank Heav'n! I know it: —
Elfrid was wiser, and the King was kinder;
Even, in the Convent, he knew how to find her:
He, pious Prince! lov'd Penitence so well,
That, oft, he trac'd it to the loneliest Cell;
Confess'd the Saints Himself — bless'd Occupation!
Freely bestow'd his Princely Consolation;
And eas'd the Father Girards of the Nation.*

*Nay, 'tis no laughing Matter ——— I am serious,
I meant no Mischief, I: ——— no Hint mysterious!
Ask Hollinshead; ——— He'll tell ye, if 'tis new t'ye,
That Edgar was a Lion ——— at Church Duty.*

*One of His Virtues needs must Envy raise,
He was the veriest Patriot of His Days!
He, not to Maids, alone, thought Pity due,
His Will, unwearied, work'd for Husbands, too.
Dependent Princes sent their Wives, by th' Dozen,
To tax this Bounty of their Royal Cozen!
And Eight dubb'd Monarchs, of his own Creation,
Row'd him, in grateful Triumph, round the Nation.*

*This being so ——— what does our Author merit,
Who wrongs a Prince ——— of such a Publick Spirit!
Hang him, dull Poet! ——— I'll say nothing for him,
In good King Edgar's Quarrel, I abhor him: ———
Take him among ye, — and, if e'er you'd mend him,
To some kind Jesuit, for new Notions, send him.*

Persons Represented.

M E N.

- Edgar, *King of England*, by Mr. Mills.
Athelwold, *Earl of Lancaster*, by Mr. Bridgwater.
Leolyn, *Prince of North Wales*, by Mr. A. Hallam.
Oswald, *Minister of State*, by Mr. Theo. Cibber.
Edwin, *A Gentleman, Attendant on Athelwold.* } by Mr. Fielding.

W O M E N.

- Elfrid, *Daughter to the Duke of Cornwall*, } by Mrs. Booth.
Ethelinda, *Niece to Oswald*, by Mrs. Cibber.
Lady, *Attendant on Elfrid*, by Mrs. Grace.

Officers, Guards.

Men and Women Attendants.

The SCENE, Chester.



ATHEL.



ATHELWOLD:

A

TRAGEDY.

ACT I. SCENE I.

A Rocky Coast, without the City of *Chester*.

Athelwold, Elfrid, Edwyn, Men and Women Attendants.

Athelwold, to an Attendant.



ACK to the Boat; caution the Mariners,
When ask'd, what Lady shar'd our ill-
tim'd Wreck,

To answer, at their Peril, as I taught 'em.

Edwin. _____ (*Exit Attendant.*)

Edw. My Lord?

Athel. Haste, watchful and unmark'd,
Climb that high Path, and ent'ring my Apartment,
'Thro' the close Grove that bounds the Palace Garden,
Warn

Warn *Egbert* to receive us: So shall we shun
The City's busy Eye.——*Elfrid*, my Wife!

(Exit *Edwyn*.)

My Hope! my Fear! my Pride! my Soul's soft Joy!
Was ever fatal Shipwreck tim'd like ours?

Elf. Why kept we not the Sea? Those unseen Shoals
Had then been left, far distant.

Athel. Shame on this Pride
That swells the Hearts of Kings! ---- But that I shunn'd
His wide-stretch'd Navy, whose expanded Wings
Inclōs'd yon empty Triumph, we had, in Safety,
Held on our Coursetor *Lancaster*,——and *Edgar*,
And *Chester*'s dreaded Walls, been pass'd, unseen.

Elf. Why shunn'd you *Edgar*? You had struck no Shoal,
Had Jealousy not wreck'd you. Where was the Danger,
Had we, amid the shouting Swarms, approach'd
His glitt'ring Barge? that, proud of eight Kings rowing,
Methought, mov'd, conscious of her glorious Freight,
And felt her Sovereign's Triumph!

Athel. *Edgar* is young,
Am'rous, impatient, hot as the Summer Sun;
But as the Shadow changing. —— *Emma*, the Sister
Of *Leolyn*, my Friend, must be his Queen,
That Day once past, that Day, now near, my *Elfrid*,
Trembling no longer, for my Soul's best Treasure,
I shall unveil thee to the Eye of *Edgar*:
Then, in full Lustre, break upon the Court,
Charm the glad World, and swell the Voice of Wonder.
Till then——

Elf. Till then, you think, a Woman's Honour
Is safest when not trusted? — Come, be wise;
Laugh at your Sex's Notions, and see Truth,
Unprejudic'd by Maxim. You have been taught
That a Man's Caution guards a Woman's Virtue:
Believe me, 'tis an Error.—— Wrong'd by the Doubt,
We make that Doubt our Licence, and grow light,
To justify Suspicion.

Athel. Of thee not jealous:
I fear the Heart of *Edgar*: There is a Secret
Which, yet, thou must not know! --- For all the Glory
Fortune could heap upon a happy Wisher,
I would not he had seen thee.

Elf.

Elf. Why chuse you then
To lodge me in the Gardens of his Palace?
Athel. Safely conceal'd, in my Apartment, there,
While Triumph busies the tumultuous Court,
Fair as thou art, thou may'st remain unknown,
Till soon we re-imbark for *Lancaster*;
But Fate has driven me under *Edgar's* Eye,
Nor can I shun his Presence. — (*A Shout at distance.*
The Barge, triumphant,
'Twixt the two sounding Banks, floats proudly in;
See! the broad Sprinklings from the golden Oars,
Dash'd, in gay Mists, against the glitt'ring Sun,
Scatter a liquid Lightning! — E're the King lands,
Retire, my Soul's soft Charmer. From this Boat,
That foremost strikes the Shore, descends a Lord,
Wily, suspicious, flatt'ring, base, and busy:
Malice and Fear divide his motley Soul:
Soft'ning Submission dwells on his cool Tongue;
But his Heart burns with Envy. — See! he lands;
Oswald, the State's Prime Minister. — Retire;
He must not see thee. — Look! — *Elwyn* attends thy
Coming. (*Exit, leading Elfrid.*

Enter Oswald, attended.

Of. Away, — away! — Here! *Eldred*! — *Hubert*! —
Arnold!

Creep you this reptile Peace, when a King's Honour
Hangs on your drowsy Motion! — You to the Hall,
See the Port-Reeve prepar'd to line the Streets,
With his furr'd Gowns and Scarlet. — You to the Castle:
(*Exit first Messenger.*

Say to the Governor, the King lands short,
And means to pass the Bridge. — Haste you too, fly;
(*Exit second Messenger.*

Bid holy *Dunstun*, and his white-rob'd Train,
Throw wide the brazen Gates of the Cathedral. —
(*Exit third Messenger.*

All this was well provided for, before;
But 'tis no Fault, to seem too diligent,

Where

Where Bustling goes for Loyalty.—Earl *Athelwold*!

Re-enter Athelwold.

Fortune befriend your Hopes, my noble Lord,
As she does ours: Who, on a Day like this,
When Sovereign *Edgar* triumphs like a God!
Brings back his Godlike Fav'rite, to partake
A Splendor, thought imperfect, wanting you.

Athel. Oh! 'tis too kind, my Lord, amidst your Cares,
To waste this fine Court Rhet'rick, on a Plainness
So unadorn'd as mine! — In War's big Pomp,
The King, sometimes, in the broad Battle's Front,
Finds *Athelwold*, most near him: But, for a Day
So safely plum'd as this, a thousand Feathers,
Loftier and far more gay than mine had been,
Were proud, no doubt, to wave in State about him.

Of. Nay, my good Lord! your Enemies must own
Your Valour's ablest Rival is your Reason.

Athel. Why will you angle, with too short a Line,
In Depths of cautious Honesty? — I *know* you. —
Why will you still, you and your envious Faction,
Bow, to the happy Favourite you hate,
And smile your Curses on me? — Shame on your
Meanness!

If I deserve Esteem, give it, sincere:
If not, disdain to court the Man you fear,
And, with brave Truth, renounce me.

Of. Why, thus 'tis, ever!

Distrustful Men but nourish new Suspicions,
From the best Means we use, to quench the old.
Still I am misconceiv'd. — My Lord! My Lord!
Ill Agents have been busy. — And here comes one,

Re-enter Edwyn.

Whom *Oswald* should avoid. — I'll charm the King
With News of your Return. (*Exit Oswald.*)

Edw. A new-born Love

Is full of soft Impatience! — Soon as arriv'd,
I was commanded to return, and press you
To shorten your meant Absence.

Athel. Is she safe?

Edw. *Egbert* is warn'd, shou'd the King quit the Crowd,
And

And but approach the Garden, to conceal her.

Athel. Then I will fear

No longer, but expect the King; and meet him
With a mask'd Smile of Innocence.—O *Edwyn*!

Should *Ethelinda* know I have married *Elfrid*,
How wretched would it make her! — *Oswald* hates
thee:

As if he read our Secret, through thy Heart;
Saw there thy gen'rous Silence, which conceals
My dear stol'n Night of Joy with that soft Charmer.
Who that saw both, could think *her* Neice to *Oswald*?

Edw. So, my good Lord, would her false Servant say;
That doubly faithless Fair-one, who betray'd
To me her Lady's Honour, yet forsook me!

Athel. She wrong'd her Mistress; but she lov'd thee surely!
Who, in that Secret, gave up both our Honours,
To thy late Keeping.—But, since all was told thee,
'Twere now a fruitless Point of proud Reserve,
With thee, to keep that Silence, which the Favour'd
Shou'd hold, in rev'rence of a Lady's Honour,
As sacred as his Glory.—Oh! suppose not,
Because she bless'd my Wishes, that *Ethelinda*
Yielded like common Beauties.

Edw. 'Twas plain, you lov'd her;
For, when her Horse was drown'd, in *Severn's* Ford,
You, from your own, leapt, rash: Thro' the swol'n
stream,

Plung'd on, and snatch'd her, sinking.

Athel. True, I lov'd her,
But lov'd her with *Desire*: while, in *Her* Breast,
Love, which, at first, was gen'rous Gratitude,
Drew all its Warmth from Pity.—Never, never,
Shall I forget, how blisfully I won her!

'Twas the dear Night, before this fatal Journey;
I found her, *Edwyn*, sunk on her Couch, alone,
Weeping, with am'rous Grief, for coming Absence:
Loose and enchanting-negligent her Dress;
Faint was her Air; and a kind nameless Languor
Sigh'd, in short Heavings, from her soften'd Heart,
And every Breath was Tenderness and Love!

There,

There, while transported, on my trembling Knee,
 Bending, I gaz'd, and hung devoutly o'er her,
 Raptur'd, and charm'd, I plung'd amidst Attraction;
 Sigh'd on her Eyes; breath'd o'er her panting Bosom,
 And snatch'd her Soul, unguarded: ——— Millions of
 Vows,

Fierce, burning, Vows! of Everlasting Love,
 Transport, and Marriage, and Eternal Truth,
 Thaw'd her reluctant Vertue to Belief:

Then——in the soft Desire's new Warmth, I press'd her,
 Till, in the beating Tumult of her Heart,
 She gave——she knew not what——nor meant Compliance!

Fortune renounce me, *Edwyn*, but my Reason
 Prefers her, even to *Elfrid*: —My Passion did not.
 The Love she felt for me, I feel for *Elfrid*;
 And am unwillingly undone——like Her.

(*A warlike Symphony.*)

Hark! ——— the King lands. Th'avenging Hand of
 Heaven

Points out my Baseness. — How shall my guilty Eye
 Meet the wrong'd Goodness of the Royal *Edgar*!
 How shall I skreen the Charms of injur'd *Elfrid*
 From the King's sight! — What shall my bleeding
 Heart

Say, to lost *Ethelinda*? — Yet, *Edwyn*, find her:
 Tell here I come, while every busy Eye
 Hangs on the Pomp, to sigh my Soul out to her.
 Say in the Inmost Garden——The Close Walk,
 That points upon the Grotto.

Edw. Fatal Wreck!

Heaven, that commission'd it, avert my Fears.

(*Exit Edwyn.*)

Athelwold, alone.

He comes.——I'll walk a Turn behind these Rocks;
 And gather Firmness, to sustain his Eye,
 Whom, most of Men I love; yet, most have wrong'd.

(*Exit.*)

S C E N E.

SCENE. II.

Enter Edgar, from the Triumph, attended by Leelyn, Oswald, &c.

Ed. Chester, this Act, to Time's last Hour, renowns
Thy Name, with *Edgar's*. Far, as the bounded World
Gives Space for Fame to breath in, shall be spread
The Boast of this Day's Triumph. — Yet, thou say'st,
Nations, whose Names lie deep, in unborn Time,
Will rise, and censure, and mistake our Purpose.

Leo. Many will judge amiss, and call it Insult.

Ed. I know it, and despise it. My freed Soul
Then, stript of her Encumb'rance, mounting strong,
Shall rise, above Ambition; nor hold Fame
By the faint Tenure of weak mortal Praise:
But from the Partners of her bright Enlargement!
Spirits! that judge unprejudic'd, and move
Unbounded, and, in Millions, fill those Voids,
Which Thought ev'n akes, to guess at!

Leo. The Forms of Homage
Differ, with Sovereign's Wills: yet are but Forms.
Kings suffer not by Seemings; it they did,
The Shame, that follows Insult, wou'd cut double,
And wound the Wounder deepest.

Ed. Nobly spoke!
Spoke like the Friend of *Edgar*, and of *Athelwold*!

Osw. Malignant Envy will not dare misjudge
The Virtues of our Monarch. Rais'd to this Height,
Our Wishes are outstript; and all our Task
Is, to receive, and wonder at, our Blessings!

Ed. No Flattery, *Oswald*. — 'Tis my noblest Pride
To have *deserv'd* Applause: to listen to it
Sullies the conscious Glory. — *Athelwold*! —

Re enter Athelwold.

Friend, of my Soul! my Life's best self! my, Light!
My every Wish at once, and every Blessing!
(*Athelwold, kneeling.*)

My Gracious, partial, Sovereign!

Ed.

Ed. Rise — nor distress me,
 With this vain Ceremony. Bow, but to Heaven,
 That made thee *not* a King, to make thee *more*;
 And stamp't thy Soul divinely! — *Cornwall's* Daughter,
 I find, deserv'd not, I so long shou'd lose thee,
 All thy long Letters, welcome, as they were,
 Brought me no Hope from *Elfrid*: Fame, it seems,
 Deceiv'd us, and had flatter'd her.

Athel. She's Fair:

But never cou'd have been that striking Charmer,
 So found and lost at once. *She* flames not out
 With that strong Blaze of Charms; that living Fire!
 That burns, unquench'd, upon your Royal Memory.

Ed. No, *Athelwold*; — I see, I hear, she cannot.
 Else, had thy Eyes catch'd Fire, and stream'd it on me.
 Else, had thy labouring Heart, oppress'd with Meaning,
 Shook, like an Earthquake, in Discharge of Passion. —
 Thou art a *cold* Describer! — Oh! — the Day!
 The dear, remember'd Day! when, at the Altar,
 Where, in Thanksgiving, I had bow'd to Heav'n,
 Heav'n seem'd descending on me! — My rais'd Eye
 Met her flash'd Charms, amidst a gazing Crowd,
 Who, from the Scaffolded Cathedral's Sides,
 Pour'd their bold Looks upon me: Greatness, and
 Languor,

Flow'd, in a soften'd Radiance, from her Mien,
 And kindled every Shrine, with new Divinity!
 Sweetness sat smiling, on her humid Eye-balls:
 And light-wing'd Fancy danc'd and flam'd about her!
 Scarce were the solemn Duties of the Place
 Remember'd, while I saw her! — At last — with
 Pain, —

Slow — dragging my reluctant Eyes away,
 I lost her; — e're Religion licens'd Love
 To steal a second Wonder.

Osw. Strange! that since then,
 Inquiry shou'd have toil'd in vain to find her!

Ed. One wou'd have thought, the Light that paints
 the World,
 Might have been lost, as possibly as hers!

But,

But, since all Search is vain, and far-fam'd *Elfrid*
Fails my last Hope, I will redeem my Heart,
And quench the blazing Image.—Danger, and Arms,
Shall fright the trembling Softness from my Soul.
I will resume War's Thunder — *Athelwold!* — *Leolyn!* —
Help me to conquer: Wake me again to Glory:
Tear me from Love, — and guide me to Renown.

(*Trumpets without.*)

Hark! — They move on. — Stay; — Friends have
much to speak of.

Anon, we meet again. —

(*Exit Edgar, follow'd by Oswald, &c.*)

Athel. Prince *Leolyn*,

You had a warlike, tho' unhappy, Father.
Yon rugged Hills have eccho'd with his Glory.
But, that his last too fatal Rashness forfeited
Half *Wales*, your Patrimony, *Edgar* blushing,
Must have remember'd, when he spoke of Love,
You have a Sister's claim.

Leo. *Emma*, my Lord,

Was then a Sovereign's Daughter: now, she is sunk
To Sister of a Subject. Time was, when *Edgar*,
Short of his present Fortune, weigh'd my Daring;
And vow'd my Sister shou'd partake his Throne:
He sees me, now, grown tame: an humble Sufferer!
And, while he holds my Lands, neglects my Blood;
And boasts another Love, to shame my Patience.

Athel. Hope better from him. The King's Heart is
Noble,

And his past Promise sacred. Passion's Tide
Bears him assant, and must awhile have Way.
Unite your means with mine: my Fate requires
Your Sister shou'd be Queen. Urge Rights of Faith,
And leave th' Event to me.

Leo. I can urge nothing.

Let me confess, that Love, the smiling Ruin,
Love! has unman'd me, till my soften'd Heart
Wants ev'n the Will to murmur. — *Ethelinda*,
The gentle *Ethelinda*! fills my Soul.

Why start you at her Name? why have you shun'd

To urge her Pity, in your Friend's Behalf ?
 You sav'd her Life, and must have Int'rest in Her,
 To aid a Lover's Wishes.

Athel. Oh! Friendship! Friendship!
 To what wilt thou reduce me!

Leo. I doubt not Friendship.
 I speak of Love—my Love to *Ethelinda*.

Athel. Be wise, and think no more of *Ethelinda*.

Leo. Bid me not live, and I'll obey you gladly.
 But, when you bid me cease to think of *Her*,
 You bid me live to Sense of all Death's Pains,
 And die to all Life's Comforts.

Athel. How dead is Passion!
 You must not think of *Ethelinda*.

Leo. I must not?

Athel. Unless you cease to press my Aid, you must not.

Leo. Great is your Power, 'tis true, and no where
 greater

Than in the Breast of *Leolyn*.—Yet, sure!
 A Prohibition of such fatal Weight,
 Owes your Friend's Ear some Reason?

Athel. I have no Reason.
 Ruin and Fate break in upon my Schemes,
 And plunge me in Confusion.

Leo. Ruin and Fate!
 Schemes and Confusion!—This Disorder proves
 What I've long fear'd, that where I hop'd a Friend,
 I fir'd a Rival's Jealousy.

Athel. You wrong me, Prince:
 Widely, you wrong me!

Leo. Oh!—Grant, Heaven, I may!—
 Ease my Impatience, quickly then, and say,
 Whence that Confusion rose?

Athel. From you; from *you*:
 From *Ethelinda*, Friendship, Honour, Pity:
 Spare me the Torment of a plainer Reason,
 And, trust my Faith, there is one.

Leo. Is one?—Ha!
 What plainer Reason?—Perish all my Hopes
 Unpitied,—I et my hated Name be blotted
 From every List of Honesty and Fame,

If I renounce not *Athelwold's* false Friendship,
And, from this Moment, hold him for my Foe,
Till he discloses this pretended Secret,
That my Heart springs to snatch at.

Athel. Hot *Leolyn*!

Rash, headstrong Man! — Now, by th' eternal Power
By Heaven's all-dreaded Throne! thou shalt not. —

Leo. Shall not! What!

Not marry *Ethelinda*?

Athel. Impatient *Leolyn*!

Why dost thou interrupt me? —

Leo. Impatient, said'st thou?

I am Frost, Rock, Ice, Adamant! — Perdition!

Impatient? I am an Anvil. — Shall not marry her?

Athel. I see you mov'd, — and bleed with Pity for
you.

You said I was your Rival: Hear me, rash Man!

For I will shame Suspicion, by a Trust

Your Levity deserves not. — Am I thy Rival? —

Take then this Secret from me: Yes, *Leolyn*,

Woman and Love have made a Traitor of me.

I have, indeed, been false, but not to thee:

I have deceiv'd the King, — have married *Elfrid*,

And found her Beauty more than Fame had spoke her.

This known, destroys me: Yet ev'n this I tell,

To ease the throbbing Doubt of thy fond Heart.

Leo. Ease! what! whom! — said'st thou not that

Ethelinda

Must not be mine? that *Ethelinda* shall not?

And, while Life trembles at it, thou wouldst sooth me

With a slight Tale of *Elfrid*! — Why dost thou trifle
with me?

Or dost thou know, for by my Heart's lost Hope,

Thou seem'st to mean it, — some black secret Story

That her fair Fame is touch'd by — Ha! — by that
Heaven

That doom'd me, from my Birth, to Wrongs and Shame

Thou hast thyself betray'd my *Ethelinda*!

My tortur'd Mem'ry recollects your Looks,

Her Blushes, your Confusion, when by chance

Athel. alone. Why hop'd I Peace, who had declin'd from
Virtue!

The Innocent alone *act* steadily;
The Guilty can but *mean* it. — O *Ethelinda*! —
In the dark Race of Vice, when once begun,
We start on Mischiefs we most wish to shun:
Push'd by the Fate of Guilt, and thence accurs'd,
New Crimes grow needful, to support the first;
Till, from Dishonour, we to Ruin fall,
And one disjointed Virtue loosens all.

ACT II. SCENE I.

A Grove, in the Palace Garden,

Athelwold, Ethelinda.

Ethelinda.

ALL this is false in Reason; but your Eloquence,
Proud of its Power, provokes you to offend,
That you may force Forgiveness. — Was it not cold,
Too cold for Love, in all this cruel Length
Of cheerless Absence, when your dang'rous Charge too,
Was but to gaze on Beauty, never to write?
Never to bid me hope, the much-fear'd *Elfrid*
Had left your Heart still partial to my Fondness?
A Fondness that destroy'd me! Turn your Eyes from
me;

—— They look as they'd reproach me: Do not see
me,

But tell me why you made such speed to leave me?
Had you but stay'd, to add one Hour of Peace
To those of guilty Softness; Had I been yours;

Your Wife, that fatal Morning, you do not know
What Tears it wou'd have sav'd me.

Athel. Oh! speak no more;

Your Words are wing'd with Fire; they pierce my
Soul:

They enter, and burn in me! — Oft have I trembled,
As I do now, when Rev'rence and Desire,
Shot from those Angel Eyes, have warr'd within me:
Yet never was I thus distress'd, before!

Ethel. That you are gen'rous, my fond Heart confesses;
Else, how destroy'd a Wretch were *Ethelinda*!

If, like the base among your Sex, you shunn'd me,
Nor pitied the kind Weakness that betray'd me,
But added Shame to Guilt, and grew inconstant,
And left me, for another; Save me, ye Saints!
To what a dreadful Depth of startling Misery
Had my lost Honour plung'd me!

Athel. Grac'd, as you are,

With artless Virtue, and unconscious Beauty,
Strengthen'd with Wisdom, sanctified by Truth,
And fainted o'er with Sweetness! — Tho' your Voice
Is tun'd to Transport, and each melting Accent
Shakes to my Soul, and swells Despair, to Musick;
Yet is there something so disorder'd, here,
That I ev'n wish thee silent! — Thy soft Words,
Moving, and warm, and gentle as thy Bosom,
Strike me, like Death, when his eternal Frost
Creeps in cold Anguish o'er us!

Ethel. Oh! my kind Lord!

To feel this wondrous Extasy, for me!

This noblest, tend'rest, Mark of mournful Passion!

Is such a sweet Atoneement for my Tears,

That I could weep for ever. — Be it my Glory,

My Duty's Pride, and my full Heart's chief Joy,

To give unbounded Love, in soft Exchange,

For your indulg'd Endearment. — Let me not live,

If I prefer not that dear Name, your Wife,

To all those empty Sounds, those titled Nothings,

Which *Edgar* treasures for his unknown Queen!

— My Lord! — you start. — and tremble, and look
pale!

Come,

Come, — this quick Sense of Gratitude and Love
Works too intense, and I must chide you for it.

Athel. It is too much: ——— And Honour and Hu-
manity

Disclaim the brutal Heart that cou'd bear this,
And be less mov'd than I am. ——— Curse on the wild,
The boundless Luxury of wanton Love!
What have I lost! What am I doom'd to suffer!
Who cou'd heap Sufferings here!

Ethel. Sufferings, my Lord!

And wanton Love? ——— What Love? ——— Whose
Sufferings?

Athel. Mine, mine, thou injur'd Truth! ——— who
cou'd name wanton,

And mix a Thought of thee?

Ethel. But you nam'd Sufferings!

Athel. What Lover lives without 'em?

Ethel. A Lover's Sufferings

Once past, give present Joys a livelier Relish:
The sacred Tie that firms a Wife's soft Claim,
Will free pain'd Mem'ry from the Blush of Weakness.

(*Athelwold aside.*)

How mean is Guilt, that it must bow the Heart
To Falshood and Disguise! ——— New in Dissembling
I shall betray my Grief, and shame my Art. ———
The Suffering that I meant, my *Ethelinda*,
Was, that an ill-tim'd Chance, awhile, with-holds
Our Hands: But what are nuptial Forms, to Love!
Prince *Leolyn*, my Friend, ——— alas! he loves you;
Loves you, my Soul's sweet Pain, to such Excess,
That his Life hangs but on his Hope of you!
Jealous, he dies with Fear, that I am now
His Rival in your Love: ——— what will he feel
When I am own'd your Choice! ——— May not your Pity
Indulge appearance, for my Friend's wish'd Ease,
Till Time, or accident, gives means to save him?
Mean while. ———

Ethel. What wou'd you do, mean while, my Lord?
You wou'd not sure! that I receive him? hear him?

Athel. That were too much. It might, perhaps,
Suffice, B 4 Shou'd

16 A T H E L W O L D.

Shou'd I, more rarely, and with Caution, seek
The Blessing of your Presence.

Ethel. My Lord! My Lord!

You are detected. — My taught Heart, at length,
Blind as love made it, sees your Baseness through,
And burns with Shame, and bursts with Indignation.
This poor Deceit was form'd, but to evade
My due Repair of Honour. 'Twas the word Wise,
That made this sudden Politician of you! —

Athel. Soften those angry Eyes, which sparkle on me.

Ethel. — Away, — nor bring Contagion to my
Soul.

— Oh! what a dreadful Change in my poor Heart
Has one weak Moment made! — scorn'd, like the Vile,
Dishonour'd, infamous, despis'd for ever,
I must become a Wanderer round the World;
Meet Cold — and Hunger, — Poverty and Shame,
Anguish and Insult. — Better, all, than Man!
The faithless Murd'rer, Man! — What am I doom'd
to?

Whom have I trusted! Oh! revenging Heav'n!
See my Distress, and punish me with more;
I cannot be too wretched. — Begone, Deceiver.
I wou'd not curse thee. — I will not wish thee Pain;
But, never, never, let me see thee more.

Athel. Be not transported thus. —

Ethel. Insolent Coldness!

But I deserve it all. — My Fairy Dream
Must last no longer, and I wake to Woe.
The pleasing Folly sinks; and, in its Room,
Rise Penitence, and Scorn, and lasting Pain.
Now, now, the shifting Scene makes haste to change!
Now, now, comes on the Race of Shame, and Grief,
Which every Woman is condemn'd to run,
Who trusts her Honour to betraying Man! —
Yet, every Woman, where she loves, believes;
Tho', not to doubt, is thus to be undone!

Oh! what a Difference, 'twixt the Calms of Virtue,
And these heart-rending Pangs of Guilt and Shame!
Far has your fatal Journey out-gone all

That

That my slow Fears forboded! — These are the Joys,
The Sweets, the Transports, the Eternal Rounds
Of Love, and Tenderneſs, and Gratitude,
Which were to charm away my ſenſe of Ruin! —

O Woman! Woman! — What is Vanity!

What is Beliet, that, tho' a Thouſand fall,

We ſtill ſhall Conquer, and ſtill hold our Conqueſts!

Athel. By the ſweet Mem'ry of that deareſt Night!

Ethel. Curſe on th' ill-choſen Oath! — All, you
can ſwear

By That, will be as falſe and baſe as you are.

Looſen your hated Hold: — I will not hear you.

Athel. Cou'd you ſay *hated*?

Ethel. Off — By the Eye of Heaven,

That ſaw my Faith betray'd, not all thy Arts

Shall ſooth me to forgive thee. — Away. — Be
gone.

Athel. Look yonder! —

By all my Hopes of Peace, your Uncle *Oſwald*,
And *Leolyn*, in Conference! — Oh! think — Recover
Your ſcatter'd Spirits; and, round the neighb'ring Grott,
Let us take different Walks, and ſhun their Eye.

Ethel. When next I ſee thee, may my Woes!

Athel. Oh! hold. —

That Oath wou'd kill me. — Why do you tremble
thus?

Shall we not meet again?

Ethel. Once — and no more,

Till in Eternity.

Athel. An Hour hence, here.

(*Exeunt ſeverally.*)

S C E N E II.

Enter Oſwald, and Leolyn.

Oſw. What! and was this your doughty Cauſe of
Quarrel,

Be cauſe he boalts to have won from *Ethelinda*,
That Woman's Toy you fight for?

Leo. I wiſh, indeed:

But

18 A T H E L W O L D .

But cannot wish dishonourably.

Osw. That is,

You wou'd not tell, as he does: — why that's generous!

Honour, in Love, is Silence. — But two such Friends
As you and *Athelwold*, cannot, methinks,
Have fought an am'rous Quarrel. — Your Rival's
Thoughts

Are fill'd with high State Projects? something like Jealousy

Of Trust suppos'd betray'd? — some Plot? some Schemings?

Some Aim your Caution started at? or which
Your Oath to *Edgar* check'd your wish'd Assent to?
Something like this, no doubt, provok'd proud *Athelwold*.

No matter. — Fear him not. *Oswald* has Power,

And can procure you the King's Thanks, perhaps,
Ev'n against favour'd *Athelwold*. — As for his Tale
Of *Erbelinda*, Women are passive Agents;
And, when Love prompts them, can out-suffer Martyrs.
I wou'd not swear he wrongs her: yet I think so.
Believe him not: till I have founded her.

Halt *Wales*, with *Leolyn*, a Prince restor'd,
Shou'd please a Woman, better than Earl *Athelwold*,
A Traitor, fall'n from Power. — Was it not thus?
Speak frankly to your Mistress's Disposer,
And let Her thank your Loyalty.

Leo. Lord *Oswald*,

I am unpractis'd in the Arts of Court;
And my free Thoughts range open as my Eye-balls.
Wrong'd as I am by *Athelwold*, my Heart
Disdains to hide his Virtues — He may have wishes:
He may deceive, in Love, but not in Loyalty.
A brave Man cannot serve a Prince, and wrong him.

Osw. Nobly remark'd. — In Faith your Honour charms me!

We live in dang'rous Times, and Men must learn
To try the Bosoms they wou'd trust their Peace in:

What

What sudden Ruin might not care'less Innocence
Draw on a great Man's Fortune?— Had I unwarily
Espous'd your Int'rest, e're my Art had pois'd
Your hop'd Fidelity, I had not known you !
Now, all that *Ethelinda* holds is yours
But what's already *Athelwold's*.

Leo. By Heav'n !

I cannot bear th' insinuated Guilt ;
The shadowy doubt distracts my tingling Heart,
And I cou'd kill thee, but for trifling on it.

Osw. Kind, temp'rate, Madman !—— Take my
Thanks, so due

To your indulg'd Ferbearance.—— By good Saint
Austin !

These Lovers are the wildest of all Lunaticks ;
Their Ravings have no Intervals !— But see,
Your smiling Stars have sent your Mistress hither ;
That Madness may be march'd, and sooth'd with Folly.

Leo. Oh ! my full Heart !—— 'Tis she——

Osw. Thou finish'd I over !

Come—— Hear me charge her, for thee.—— So, *Ethelinda*.

Enter Ethelinda.

Alone? and Cheeks thus rosy !—— One wou'd have
sworn,

The Sun, as lively as He looks to day,
Had wanted warmth, without a Lover's Aid,
To light up that Carnation !

Ethel. I meant, my Lord,

To have left the Garden —— But mistook the Walk,
I know not how —— I found the Inner Door
Fast lock'd —— So cr me about, this shadier Way.

Osw. You seem confus'd, methinks ?

Ethel. But warm, my Lord.

Osw. 'Tis a good Omen to a Lover's Hopes,
That you bring warmth about you.—— Prince *Isolyn*
Has sigh'd a thousand Raptures, in your Praise,
And, that he loves you truly, take th's Mark ;
Elsewhere he's Eloquent—— Dumb in your Company :
And never look'd so like the Thing he is not,

As

As you now see him.

Leo. Oh! judge not of my Pain,
By this too light Description.—Did not soft Trem-
blings

Seize on my Tongue, I cou'd have told my Passion,
In words, that humbler Truths have taught to speak it.

Ethel. 'Tis yours, my Lord, by Priviledge of Blood,
To treat me without Ceremony.—But—Sir!

If you wou'd have me think, you really love,

Swear but to grant the first Request I make,

And I shall wish you happy.

Leo. I swear, with Transport.

Ethel. This moment leave me, then, nor ever more,
Speak of your hopeless Passion.

(Exit Leolyn, bowing.)

Ow. I did not think that thou had'st halt this Brav'ry;
Nor knew thee for a Heroine!—why, what a Pity!
This well-tim'd Fierceness, this high Flash of Spirit,
Met not the same deserv'd success, as now,
When try'd against Earl *Aethelwold*!

Erhel. Against Earl *Athelwold*?

Osw. Against him, for him, on him, or about him.

I am not nice, in Women's Rhetorick:—

It I must speak it plainer, it had been well

You had defended your lost Honour, there.

As, here, your peevish Pride,——Come, come,——

I know you!

These Secrets keep not long, in our Court Air :

Already 'tis the Whisper of the Drawing-Room ;

And by To-morrow the King's Grooms will have it.

Ethel. What have I liv'd to hear!—Is it, my Lord,

A wonder that I tremble?—Who? what bold Villain,

Has gather'd Malice, from the Forge of Hell,

To charge this Falshood on me ?

Osw. Why, thou woud'st call him,

No Doubt, Sweet *Athelwold*! — Ay, stare,——no matter.

When next you meet, my Honour against yours,

Great odds, as Things go now! He'll be forgiven.

Ethel. Did *Athelwold*, the soft, the gen'rous *Athel-*
wold! Say

Say This, of *Ethelinda*?

Osw. Say it?—He sings it;
Boasts it, proclaims it.—Nay, within this Hour,
Hung it on his Sword's Point, and held it out,
To clear the lov'd-dim'd Eyes of *Leolyn*.

Ethel. Oh!—ill-known *Athelwold*!
Where shall afflicted Ruin rest conceal'd,
If in a Breast like thine it finds no shelter?

Only forbear to curse me.—I do not kneel
In Hope of fruitless Pardon.—Infamy,
And Scorn, and Want, and Shame, are light Revenge,
To what I feel within me!—Conscious Remorse,
And Rage, at my own Weakness, plunge Despair,
And Agony, and Madness, thro' my Breast;
And I shou'd be a Slave, if I cou'd wish
To live, and let the Sun's broad Eye look on me.

Osw. Rise, *Ethelinda*,—and hide thee in thy Chamber:

There, as thou can'st, be comforted.—Anon
I will consider, with thee, what is due
To Pity, what to Honour.—In yon cross Walk
Of meeting Sycamores, or my Eyes cheat me,
Or I discern the King!—Tis he!—Begone.

(*Exit Ethelinda.*)

What brings him hither, at a Time like this?
His step more hasty too, and his rais'd Look
More ardent, and intent, than I have seen it!

Enter Edgar.

Edg. *Oswald*!—where is she?—pass'd she not this Way?

Osw. Who? Gracious Sovereign!

Edg. She,— the only She:—

Star of my Hope! The Phantom of Desire!
The Power! that, thro' my Eyes, rush'd on my Soul,
And reigns, unnam'd, within me!—Mounted, but
now,

I led the shouting Thousands slowly on:
Rounding the Hill, beneath the terrass'd Garden,
There, from above, her Angel Form look'd over,
And beam'd Amazement on me.—As once in Arms,

Thou

Thou did'st behold me, like the Lightning's Flash,
Shoot from my Saddle, to the Aid of *Athelwold*,
Dismounted, and in Danger; such was the Fire
With which I leapt, from my wide-starting Horse,
That side-long fled my Shadow! Low on the Ground,
I knelt, and gaz'd up at her — The sudden Stop
Spread an Alarm thro' out; and the check'd Triumph
Halted, in short Confusion — This, when she saw,
Surpriz'd, she darted inward from my Sight,
And left Despair behind her!

Osw. Was it now,
My Ever-gracious Lord?

Edg. This instant; now.

Blest by unusual Chance, a private Key
Gave me swift Entrance, thro' the Postern Door,
To seek her, in the Garden. — Am I awake!

Enter Elfrid.

Look! *Oswald*, look! — Again, the shining Vision
Breaks on my glowing Eyes! — Thou Pride of Day-
light!

'Thou fairest, loveliest, noblest Work of Nature!
It thou art mortal, as my beating Heart,
And my fierce Wishes promise, how have I lost thee?
Where is the Happy Corner of the World,
That cou'd, thus long, conceal thee?

(Elfrid aside.

Again the King! —

Such was the conqu'ring, the commanding Softness,
With which he knelt, at the remember'd Altar,
Whence my long Woes took Date! — Sir, — is it
generous,

With this light Freedom of licentious Rallery,
To shock a Stranger's Modesty?

Osw. Madam —

Edg. Be dumb. —

(Exit Oswald.

Why have those piercing Eyes so ill distinguish'd
The Rev'rence of my Ardour? — Licence and Free-
dom

Wou'd, in your presence, be dissolv'd to Awe,

And

And flow in Sighs to soften you — This Hand!
Oh! give it me, — and I will swear upon it,
That my charm'd Spirits never rose, till now,
In such a Tide of Extacy! — That Heaven
Has left your Sex in shade, to light up you,
With every Grace that swells Desire in Mortals;
Or gives your Guardian Angel Pride to view you!

Elf. What am I doing? Whither am I drawn?
Oh! the too charming, the persuasive Speaker!
I feel his powerful Voice, in every Vein,
As if my Heart expected, and confess'd him.

Sir! — if a Woman, flatter'd thus agreeably,
Can judge unprejudic'd, you seem of Birth,
Of Honour, and of high Accomplishment!
I cannot therefore doubt, that when I tell you
Earl *Athelwold* protects me, you will forbear
To press upon the Solitude I seek,
And, for his sake, regard me.

Edg. If *Athelwold*
Protects you, I am *Athelwold's* Protector;
And you are doubly safe. —

Elf. Perhaps, my Sovereign! —
Forgive an Ign'rance, that cou'd see and hear you,
Yet waited, to be told, you were a King.
Heaven has diffus'd around your speaking Air
A Glow of Majesty, that marks you Royal.
I shou'd have knelt, before, and paid this Duty,
Undoubting that I ow'd it.

Edg. Rise — dear Divinity!
And charm me with the sweet, the heav'nly Name
You must be worship'd by? — You said that *Athel-*
wold

Was your Protector: Are you of his Blood?
Nothing but that can make him dearer to me!

Elf. Ask me not, what I must of Force conceal,
And shou'd have more conceal'd, but my Surprise
Drew it unpurpos'd from me. There is a Reason,
A pow'rful Reason! why I must insist
You suffer me to leave you: my Stay wou'd ruin me.
If you have ever felt an am'rous Tendernefs,

And

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And have not feign'd it now, you will not wish
To make a Woman wretched.—I dare no more
Than this——You cannot love, if you detain me.

Edg. Riddles and Torture!——my charm'd Soul is
fill'd

With unspoke Meanings for an Age to come,
And you are measuring Moments!

Elf. Are you a King?

Is it your Right to *rule*?——Command your Passi-
on—

There is a Liberty, that dwells with Love,
Too brave for forc'd Submission——Stir not to fol-
low me:

For, if you do, by all that's holy here,
And dreadful in Eternity! I swear,
I will be lost for ever.

(*Exit Elfrid.*)

Edg. The conscious Grandeur of her inborn Pride
Inflames her, for a Queen! Aw'd by her Frown,
I stood, insensible, and unresolv'd,
Nor knew that I obey'd her.—How blind is Love!
Who wou'd have hop'd, this Soft'ner, of my Soul,
While *Athelwold* was wand'ring in her search,
Was of the Blood, and in the House, of *Athelwold*.

In vain proud Man, with busy Blindness, strives:
And, thro' long Mazes, each dark Purpose drives,
Lost, on the Depth of Heaven's unfounded Will,
We still float doubtful, yet are active still:
Unwearied with Mistakes, err on, content,
And deviate into Blessings, never meant.

A C T

A C T III. S C E N E *continues.*

Oswald and Leolyn.

Leolyn.

Patience! — Curse Patience: why dost thou talk of
Patience,
With the same Breath, the same cold, tasteless Calmness
That spoke Distraction to me? Hast thou not told me
That she confesses it? that this proud Beauty,
This haughty, fierce, disdainful, marbly Vertue,
That scorn'd my honest Passion, this austere Frowner!
Has been ——— Perdition on the Name! 'Twould choak
me. —

Hast thou not fir'd me with the basest Truth
That ever stung the Heart of a Fool Lover!
And dost thou talk of Patience? ——— Give it to States-
men;

I spurn the servile Lesson. Patience! said'st thou?
Rage and Despair have broke upon my Soul,
And wash'd away all Patience.

Osw. My Spirit,
Thank Heaven! is none of these wild fiery Racers;
That, like a Spark in Flax, if not strait smother'd,
Burns up the Road it runs thro'; yet I feel Warmth,
When chaf'd by Provocation: And let me tell you,
There may be ways, and we may find 'em Prince,
To reach this proud Presumer.

Leo. I must not aid thee:
He was my Friend; and then, my Life was his,
By Tie of Duty.—He was, since, my Enemy;
And then, again, 'twas his, by Claim of Conquest.
I've lost Revenge, to Honour.—I have no Right
To lift my Arm against him: For, from a Hand
Oblig'd as mine has been, Justice itself
Would redden into Murder.—But, were I *Oswald*,
Wrong'd, as thou art, and free to weigh thole Wrongs,

C

Without

Without this Counterpoise of Obligation,
I would hunt *Athelwold* to the World's Verge;
Nay, would leap after him, and snatch at Vengeance,
Through the unfathom'd Depth of dark Eternity.

Osw. I too, perhaps,
Who have as light a Spring as you, Prince *Leolyn*,
Might try that dreadful Leap, could I be sure
That it was bounded, *But* by Depth and Darkneſs:
But, ſhou'd there lie ſome Realm of Light beyond,
I ſhould look fooliſhly, when I fell through,
To find my State grown worſe than 'twas before,
And no Road back again. — Methinks 'tis ſtrange,
That you, hot Fighters, Friends of bare-fac'd Anger,
Have never learnt our ſafer courtly Art
Of Vengeance without Danger! — You injure me,
And I aſſault you openly: — Man againſt Man
Gives Chance an equal Caſt: 'Tis you or me:
Suppoſe, as firſt you wrong'd, you, now, ſhou'd kill
me?

Where's Vengeance then? What Equity is here!
No; — let me pay th' Aſſault, with a firſt Blow,
Whereby I hazard nothing: That ſets us equal;
And, if I do not ſtrike home he's then, at liberty
To ſtand on even Terms, and try, once more.

Leo. What dar'ſt thou do, for *Ethelinda's* Honour?

Osw. Force him — to pleaſe her on, and marry
her.

Leo. He cannot marry her.

Osw. Why truly, he who has, unmarried, won
What others marry for, will wed at leiſure.

Leo. Cannot. — I ſay. — Death! thou art
ſuch a Triſler!

Osw. If you had ſaid he *wou'd not* marry her,
Your Doubt had err'd, with Likelihood. — But that
a Man

Has taught a Maid what Wives alone ſhould learn,
And cannot therefore make that Maid his Wife,
Is a new Point in Logick! — Troth, I have ſeen
The Court thick ſown with theſe inſtructed Virgins,
Who all grew up, to Huſbands; and, ſometimes,

Have

Have ev'n learnt on, for Life, from their first Teachers.

Leol. Tire me no more, with this provoking Lightness,
Upon a Theme that stings me. — I tell thee, he cannot; —
Mark me, — he cannot marry *Ethelinda*;
Because — he has already married *Elfrid*. —

Osw. *Elfrid*! what *Elfrid*?

Leol. Why, that far-nois'd *Elfrid*;

What is her Father's Name? The Western Duke? —

Death! — I remember nothing: — *Cornwall*. — He:

The Duke of *Cornwall*. — She! whose fancied Charms

The King was wise enough to chuse this *Athelwold*,

His Ear's Engrosser, and his Eye's Purveyor,

To go and look at for him. — A strange mad Humour

Work'd in his Brain, that she might prove his Idol,

His wild Church-Shadow that you have heard him talk of:

You know it as well as I, — What do you gaze at?

You listen as if I prophesied!

Osw. 'Tis Prophecy!

And happily so etels the long-wish'd Downfal

Of our State-Column. — This *Atlas Athelwold*!

Who bears the Heaven of Favour on his Shoulders,

And shadows all beneath him. — But, are you sure?

Leol. I told it, not to aid thy dark Designings,

But to lament the ruin'd *Ethelinda*.

What will Fate do with that unhappy Charmer?

Honour forbids me, now, to wish her mine;

And he who has undone her is another's.

Enter Edgar Hastily.

Edg. Who is another's?

Osw. The Prince, provok'd to Warm h,

By News scarce credible, and lost in Wonder,

We heard not, Royal Sir! your near Approach.

Edg. What News? — What Wonder? — Warm?

— The Prince was warm?

Yes; — The hot *British* Blood, your Country's Proverb,

The Light'ning of your Tempers, flames, I find,

To its full Violence. — What mad Presumption

Licenc'd your Arrogance, so near my Presence;

To quarrel with Earl *Athelwold* to Day,
Whose Friendship is your Fortune?

Leol. Sir, ——— a Prince,

Tho' Fortune wrongs him, in Restraint of Power,
Thinks, like a Prince, as when his Throne sustain'd him.

Edg. His Throne! proud *Leolyn*!

Thy Father was a Rebel. — Detected Treason
Inverts the vanquish'd Traitor's Property,
And he and his lost Blood are Forfeits, all.

—— I love the fearless Bravery of free Spirits;
But thy blind Fierceness shocks me. — Urge it no farther:
A moving Pity pleads thy Cause within me;
Nor with I, thou should'st blast it.

Osw. Gracious Sovereign!

The Prince, unlike his Father, fought your Cause;
And startles me with News, which (when I tell you
It joins the Names of *Athelwold* — and Traitor)
Will justify the Wonder it has given me.

Edg. Traitor — and *Athelwold*! Profane Conjunction!
As well might the two Poles be press'd, to join,
And crush the unbelieving World, between them.

—— Take heed, rash Men! when ye dare touch the Honour
Of envied *Athelwold*, that ye not fail

To prove his Guilt, 'till, like a Sun-beam's Glare,
It dazzles my Faith's Eye, and make it weep;

Or your vile Malice shall but fan the Fire,

That kindles to consume ye! — What has he done?

Leolyn! — *Oswald*! — Speak: — one of ye, speak! —

Or must I wait, till you invent some Wile,

To skreen your trembling Envy? — What wou'd ye say
Of *Athelwold*?

Osw. Prince *Leolyn* asserts,

That he has married the fam'd Western Beauty,

And has describ'd her falsely.

Edg. Malicious Ignorance!

(after a Pause.

Oh! that the Power that rules the Heart of Man

Wou'd, ever, thus make Mischief impotent!

—— See now this Falshood! Learn to know this Traitor!

This *Athelwold*! whom your inferior Souls

Want Sympathy to judge of! — His Heart's Refinement,

His

His Elegance of Will, adorning Duty,
Has plotted, with a Subject's sweet Deceit,
To cheat his King, to Extasy! — By Heaven
I had not known, but for your bold mistaking,
That he had form'd this dear Design against me.
To Night he means, when Triumph's weary Noise
Is hush'd in Darkness, and my Mind, unbent,
Has Room for mighty Pleasure, to surprise me;
To pour upon my unexpected Soul
A Tide of Gladness. He but held it back,
To make its Flow more welcome. — But I have seen her
Thou, too, hast seen her, *Oswald*. — The big Joy
Bears down all Mem'ry, that you both presum'd
To wrong the Man I love; and I forgive it,
That you may learn to worship *Athelwold*!

Osw. Nay, I have ever said, even to his Enemies,
That he was form'd for Loyalty!

Leob. This doubling Statesman's Baseness, and the Joy
Of his imperious Master, have uprooted
The Prudence of my Patience: — I must speak,
Tho' every Glance of his disdainful Eye
Shot a new Ruin at me. — Sir! — by this Transport
Of a bless'd Lover, near his promis'd Joy,
Judge of the Vastness of my Sister's Grief;
Whom lone Despair, and Sense of hopeless Love,
Abandon to Distraction.

Edg. Is it well done
To chuse this Time, this Place, and this rash Manner,
To goad a conscious Frailty?

Leob. To-morrow, Sir,
Had been too late: For, when your Heart is fill'd
With *Elfrid*, and with Rapture, how should I hope
There can be Room, for Thoughts of a past Promise,
Or absent *Emma*'s Claim?

Edg. Now, by the Stings,
Which thy abrupt unartful Insolence
Has rous'd, to fix their Points on my touch'd Heart,
The Power of Millions, warring on my Realms,
Shou'd never force me to thy Sister's Arms.
Had she a Charm for every Fault of thine,

Nature has curs'd her with one single Stain,
That blots out all her Virtues. The Part, she shares
Of thy Rebellious Blood, is Bane to love.

— O *Athelwold*! how am I blest'd in thee!

The Guilt of others, held against thy Worth,

Reflects it stronger on me. — Well may Traitors

Malign thy Loyalty, Anripathies

I hate, by the Law of Nature. — Take this Sword:

Why have I Power, if not to curb Presumption,

When it insults my Pity? —

See him a Prisoner in the Castle-Tower!

And, when I am no longer angry, — ask me

What I resolve concerning him?

(Exit Edgar.

Leol. 'Tis well:

The World and I, grown weary of each other,

Can separate, without Sorrow.

Osw. See, it good Fortune

Brings not Earl *Athelwold* into the Garden!

Dissemble your Concern; and I will move him

To stir in your Behalf, and reconcile you

To the King's Pardon.

Leol. Shame on thy supple Soul!

Thou art the moving Shadow, on the Dial:

Point'st at each diff'rent Hour with equal Ease;

But measuring all, art nothing. —

Osw. By good St. *Austlin*,

An apt and keen Conceit! — The Castle-Tower,

And Solitude will ripen Meditation,

Till your Wit quickens, and your Fire flames double.

Enter Athelwold, starting at Sight of Leolyn.

Ath. Prince *Leolyn*! — of all the unwelcome World,
The last I would have met!

(Retiring.

Leol. Hold, Sir; — a Word. —

Osw. He has bethought him of my good Advice,

And takes the Hint, he scoff'd at. —

Leol. When my Friend serves me, I forget him not. —

Let me discharge a Debt my full Heart owes you;

It may be long, e'er we shall meet again;

Therefore, before we part, I judge it needful

To whisper in your Ear — that *Athelwold*

Is a detested Villain. —

Ath.

Ath. (*drawing.*) A Villain! *Leolyn!* — (*After a Pause.*
Yet — keep thy Life. — Thou hast been *injur'd* by me. —
The Wrongs that I have *done* forbid Revenge
Against the Wrongs I *suffer.* (*Puts up his Sword.*

Leol. Racks on thy Heart!
Forbid Revenge! how dar'st *thou* name Revenge?
Thou loose Betrayer! Thou Reproach of Greatness!
Thou dignified Deceiver! Revenge! — Great Heaven!
Let *Ethelinda's* ruin'd Innocence
Rise on thy trembling Soul, — 'twill fright Revenge,
And shake thee into Sense of silent Shame,
Thou calm, cold Ruiner!

Ath. Nay, now, thou knowest, thou wrong'st me:
I have been *too Resolv'd*, and dar'd a Guilt,
I will not dare to *justify.* — Farewel;
When, in some cooler Moment, thou deserv'st
To hear my serious Thoughts, I may confess
I have been faithless to thee.

Leol. Stay — e'er thou goest,
Let my exulting Heart proclaim one Joy;
Edgar, betray'd like me, has Power, and Will,
To punish his Betrayer. — I have told it,
Oswald already knows; — the King too knows it;
And the whole World shall join, to curse thee for it,
That thou hast married *Elfrid.* — That happy Secret
Was all, that Fortune left me, for my Vengeance,
And I have given it to the Tongues of Millions.

Ath. Thou hast not done that Outrage on thy Honour?

Leol. Not done it! — By the Pangs which wrung my
Soul

For *Ethelinda's* Ruin, but I have —
Not done it! — 'Twas the last, the liveliest Stroke,
That I could pierce thy Heart with. —

Ath. Then, thou *shalt* die, (*Drawing again.*
My Guilt, absolv'd, by baser of thy own,
Disclaims Contrition, — re-assumes Revenge,
And gives thee up, to my remorseless Anger. —
Defend thy Life, more bravely than before,
Or thy hot Blood shall blush upon my Point,
To expiate thy Dishonesty. —

Leol. See, where my Sword,
Lodg'd in a colder Hand, secures thy Bravings.
Now boast the well-tim'd Triumphs of thy Tongue,
That, safely, dares a Prisoner.

Ath. Restore it, *Oswald*;
How, or by whole Command, 'tis thine, no matter —
I have not Leisure now, to ask, or hear it:
Give him his Sword, this Instant.

Osw. My Lord, I hold it by the King's Command.

Ath. Talk not to me of Kings! — Less than a God
Wou'd now want Power to keep it; — give me the Sword,
(*Forcing the Sword from Oswald.*)
On Pain of thy own Life, refuse it not.

Away — nor interrupt us.

Osw. Alas! A as!
How fruitless is good Counsel! (*Runs out hastily.*)

Ath. Here, take thy Sword,
And teach it, if it can, to guard thy Baseness.

Leol. Oh! that my boiling Blood had no Restraint,
But Fear of what thou threaten'st! — and that this Morning
Had left Resentment free; nor curs'd my Memory
With that loath'd Life, which, since 'twas spar'd by thee,
Is mine no more, against thee. —

A.h. Perish the poor Pretence
That covers thy Confusion! — if aught, I did,
Had Merit to with-hold thy Arm, take Notice,
That I renounce it, — I despise thy Gratitude,
False, as thy Boastings. — It thou want'st yet more,
To re-inspire thy Rage, and wake thy Honour, —
I will invent *Di'graces*, to provoke thee!
If, in Contempt of thy too weak Resistance,
I spar'd thy Life, — Against my *Mercy*, weigh
My Triumph, o'er her Innocence who charm'd thee;
That makes the Balance even. — Oh! Thou hast rais'd me
To such a burning, such unmaster'd Anger,
That I grow base, as thou art, — and thy Blood
Will stream in vain to quench it.

Leol. Rail on — I'll wait,
'Spite of thy Arrogance, I'll wait, — nor kill thee,
Till some new Injury sets free my Rage,
And blots out Obligation,

Ath.

Ath. Tortures and Fire!

Shalt thou inflame me thus, — Unseat my Soul;
Tear out wrong'd Patience from my bleeding Heart,
And work me into Tempest! Then grow cool,
And insolently mild, with Stoick Tameness,
Hope, — thou could'st stop me, in the steepest Fall
Of my whole hurried Vengeance. — No, — if thou
wait'st

New Provocation, it attends thy Call;

This will enrage thee, to renew thy Rashness; (*Strikes him.*
And meet the Death I *mean* thee.

Leol. Yes — *That* has done it:

(*Drawing.*

Now, thou hast freed me, from all fond Reluctance,
And sanctified the Will, that *sin'd* before. (*They fight.*

Osw. (*without*) Haste — or we come too late. —

(*Enter Guards, and beat down their Swords.*

Ath. We are prevented.

Leol. Then I must wait, and groan for Liberty,
To thank thee, as I ought.

Ath. For Liberty!

Oh! doubt it not. — By Heaven it *shall* be thine:

I will, myself, find means to force thy Freedom,

That I may claim thy Life, in just Exchange.

Where shall we meet?

(*Sofly.*

Leol. West, on yon terrass'd Cliff.

Ath. Expect Deliverance, e'er an Hour be past;
Then haste, — and find me there.

Enter Oswald.

Osw. Quick, — seize Prince *Leolyn*.

Leol. It shall not need; my Sword is yours, again,
Conduct me, at your Pleasure.

Osw. Lead to the Tower.

(*To the Guards.*

(*Exeunt Leolyn, Oswald, and Guards.*

Ath. Be hush'd, my Heart; — forget this rash Man's
Rage,

And, till I meet him next, be weak as Woman;

For *Erbelinda* comes, and brings Reproach,

That bows me to the Dust, in conscious Shame.

Enter

Enter Ethelinda, to Athelwold.

Eth. Cool'd, by a short Reflection, into Hope,
That I mistook your Purpose, let me, yet say,
You are well met, my Lord.

Ath. Oh! ——— wou'd I were!
The Time has been, when if we two were met,
There was no World beyond us.
But, now, I wander, like some fabled Ghost,
Trembling, and earnest to impart his Secret,
Yet wanting Power to speak it.

Eth. Such Ghosts, they say,
Wait, to be spoke to, first; then they reveal
Their dreadful Wills, and vanish.— 'Twill be thus
With your proud Heart: Soon as I have accus'd you,
Cover'd with Shame, your Answer will be short,
Confus'd, and fatal; and you wil vanish from me,
Alas! I fear, for ever. — Look on me, *Athelwold!*
Raife your fal'n Eyes: — They once cou'd gaze, delighted,
And hung their Beams on mine, as both were form'd
Of one divided Flame, which parted, hard,
And struggled for Re-union. — Teach 'em, once more,
To fix an unmov'd, steadfast Look upon me;
Hold them, thus earnest, nor decline their Lids,
Till you have answer'd me this one sad Question:
What have I done, that could deserve, from *Athelwold*,
That he should boast my ruin'd Peace, to *Leolyn*?
Your conscious Eye sinks, guilty. — My Lord! my Lord!
The Virtue that inspires this gen'rous Shame,
Had shewn a nobler Influence, had it taught you,
That Insult, always base, is doubly so,
When he who caus'd the Crime, upbraids it too.

Ath. Can you believe me so deprav'd a Wretch,
Se lost to Honour, Gratitude, and Shame,
As to be conscious of a purpos'd Guilt,
Thus infamously vile?

Eth. I do, by Heaven!
Nay, know you guilty; for since I saw you last,
My Uncle cruelly reproach'd me with it,
And told me you proclaim'd it.

Ath.

Ath. Proclaim'd it! No:

I am unhappy, but I am not base.
It were too long, and too perplex'd a Tale,
While Misery lies, unloaded, on my Heart,
To undeceive thee, now. — If thou believ'st
I am that low, unmanly Wretch thou speak'st me,
Take this dishonour'd Sword, pierce my false Breast,
Revenge thy Wrongs, and save my Tongue the Shame
Of what it, soon, must tell thee.

Eth. What would'st thou tell me?

Thou tremblest! and I read some dreadful Meaning,
That struggles to break on me! — Why wilt thou kneel?
There glows a gen'rous Tendernefs about thee,
Which half absolves thy Purpose, and bids me hear thee
With Firmness and with Pity.

Ath. Oh! *Ethelinda!*

Out with it, — speak, — Would'st thou not say, — I
hate thee?

Ath. No, by my Soul, tho' Time has chang'd my Love,
'Tis chang'd, but as the Diamond, that grows brighter,
And loſt but Duſt, in poliſhing — 'Tis, now,
No more a fierce wild Flame; but, in its Place,
Truth, calmer, and more laſting. 'Tis ſoft Reſpect.
'Tis tender Thought, kind Will, and grateful Mem'ry;
'Tis Friendſhip — 'Tis ſuch Love as Angels feel,
Who mix their meeting Fires, — and flame together.

Eth. Such was the falſe, the artful Eloquence,
That lur'd me to my Ruin. But my Heart,
Inſtructed by Diſtreſs, can now read Meanings.
Who, that is new in Paſſion, could believe,
That this fair Picture, of thy faded Love,
But proves thou lov'st another.

Ath. What would'st thou ſay,
When thou ſhalt hear me own, That Fear is juſt?
When I confeſs, abhorrent of Deceit,
That Love, which ſeem'd to root my Soul in thee,
Has new tranſplanted it, to *Elfrid's* Boſom?
You ſtart! as if my Guilt were yet a Secret,
'Tho' *Leolyn*, confeſſus he has told it:
For, in his ill-retaining Breſt, I truſted

The

The fatal Secret of my double Falshood,
Both to my King and thee. He should have added,
How I was lost. — That Will, and Faith, and Reason,
At once gave Way, beneath a Weight of Passion;
And against Judgment, Honour, Love of thee,
Fame, and Allegiance, I was born away,
Till she, who should have been my Master's Queen,
Deceiv'd, like thee, became, — oh! — turn aside
Thy Eyes — while I have Voice to say — my Wife.

Eth. Go on. —

Ath. Thou art not mov'd — Some Power divine
Sustains thy gentle Soul!

Eth. I pity thee so mean a Stratagem,
Shamefully form'd to force me upon *Leslyn*,
And free thee from the Pain of long dissembling.
Go on, — that I may teach my Heart to hate thee.
This low Contrivance, this poor Trick of Art,
Is baser than Inconstancy.

Ath. Sorrow, like mine,
Sink the sad Heart too low, for Artifice,
And my proud Soul out-swells, and floats above it.
That I am lost, beyond Redemption lost,
My Roof, that once grew proud, in hopes of thee,
Conceals too clear a Witness. — Yet may'st thou curse me,
If I not reverence and esteem thee, still,
With my Heart's inmost Softness. Thy Power improves
Ev'n by Defection. Lost, to my frailer *Sense*,
My *Soul* adores thee, like some nameless Being,
In which, the Woman mixes with the Angel,
And makes a new Divinity.

Eth. Thy Words,
Thy Looks, disorder'd, and thy trembling Frame,
Fill me with Fear and Wonder. — It cannot be,
Thou should'st, thus mov'd, and movingly, dissemble:
By Havn! I will be satisfy'd. — Thou say'st,
This Rival, this imaginary *Elfrid*,
Is now in thy Apartment: I will fly thither;
And, when I have unravel'd all thy Guilt,
Let loose Despair, at once, and die, distracted,

Ath.

Ath. Oh! stay: — For Pity's Sake! for your own Sake!
For mine! For the King's Quiet!

Eth. I'll not be held,
Tho' Kings, and Flames, and War, and Devastation,
And Death himself stood threat'ning.

(breaks away, and runs off.

Edg. What! ho! — Lord *Athelwold*. (Without.

Ath. 'Tis the King's Voice!

Edg. What has, thus long, disjo'n'd thee from my Joy?
Hid from thy Sight, by the dark Grot between us,
Thy Voice took Pity on my Heart's Impatience,
And taught me how to trace thee. Pomp cou'd not please,
While Friendship waited for me: Sudden, I left
Th' unfinish'd Triumph, fill'd with a nobler Joy,
And wanting Soul to taste it, in thy Absence.

—— But thou art grown a Lover, *Athelwold*!

An angry Lady left thee! —— Is it possible,
That the unjudging Sex have Wills, so blind,
That *Athelwold*, in Love, can sigh in vain,
Punish the peevish Beauty with Neglect,
And fly to thy King's Heart, for Refuge from her.

Ath. I blush, — and am confounded, — my gracious
Lord!

To be surpriz'd in my unguarded Weakness,
By your too piercing Eye — Yet Woman's Power ——

Edg. Teach the tall Pine to bend, before the Wind. —

What! has not *Edgar* felt the Power of Woman?

They toy with Scepters, —— and the Frowns of Kings

Serve them to smile at. When the wanton Tyrants

Play over their soft Triflings to the Heart,

They set their Eyes on Fire, to light us up,

Then melt us into Warmth, that softens Wisdom,

And we receive the Stamp their Folly gives us.

But why hast thou deceiv'd thy Prince's Trust?

Thou art for ever forming some kind Plot,

To quicken Pleasure's Relish, by Surprize:

But I have now detected thee, — and mean

For once, to spoil the Grace of thy Design,

And break upon thy Purpose.

Ath. Royal Sir!

If some malicious Foe ——

Edg.

Edg. Yes, yes, they charge thee,
 And all thy Guilt lies open : — But thy Plottings
 Make Loyalty look dull, and shame plain Duty.
 I have unveil'd the Secret. Lead — to thy Lodgings:
 When we are there, I will convict thee, *Athelwold*,
 Of such Designs against thy Sov'reign's Rest,
 As more than I shall thank thee for.

A b. (Aside.) Whither will Fortune drag me — I am discover'd,

And he but puts on Joy, to shame my Ruin
 With the Contempt of Easiness.

Edg. Yes, *Athelwold*,
 Statesmen shall learn, from thy deserv'd Renown,
 From Honours thou shalt owe my strengthen'd Crown;
 That, where the Monarch is not blind of Heart,
 Affection is the Favourite's wisest Art :
 While, to Self-servers, due Contempt is shown,
 Let Friends who seek our Int'rest find their own.

A C T IV.

SCENE, *Athelwold's Apartment.*

Elfrid, and a Lady.

Elf. **W**HAT does her Coming mean? — He could
 not send her.

Of what Distinction seems she?

Lady. In her Deportment,
 Awfully sad, or proudly angry, Madam.

Elf. I saw her from the Window. She seems much
 mov'd,

And carries in her Face, a kind of War,
 Of Sorrow, against Pride; that shades, yet softens
 The Rigour of her Beauty; as I have seen
 A hovering Cloud obscure too fierce a Sun,
 And make his Influence sweeter. — Said she, my Lord
 Commissioned her to see me. —

Lady. Madam, she did;
 On sudden Business, of the utmost Consequence,

To

To your own Peace, and his.

Elf. Look! ——— what Impatience!
She stays not your Return. ——— Wait, within Call.

(*Exit Lady.*)

Enter Ethelinda.

I thought myself so much a Stranger, here,
That I receive you, Madam, in Surprise,
I may have Cause to blush at, when I've learnt
To whom I owe this Favour.

Eth. You owe it, Madam,
To the too liberal Will of one, whose Favours
More of your Sex, than you, have been oblig'd to.
So kind a Purposer as *Athelwold*,
Means much, he leaves imperfect. ——— You had rather
He should have come his own Ambassador,
Than sent a Representer, such as I am;
Unqualified to smoothe your angry Brow,
That frowns cold welcome at me.

Elf. I frown, indeed!
To hear the Name of *Athelwold* pronounc'd
With this familiar Licence! ——— Sure! you know him
With more than common Intimacy, Madam,
Who treat him with this Frankness?

Eth. If to have been his Intimate,
May licence Frankness toward him, the Court has
Claimers,

Who can dispute their Title to your Lover,
By Rights, of longer Date, and juster Tenure,
Than those you hold him by.

Elf. Your Pardon, Madam,
I find, I was mistaken in your Purpose;
But 'twas my Woman's Error. She inform'd me,
You came from *Athelwold*. Had she said for him,
I should have better known with what Respect
To entertain your Visit. ——— On my Word,
He was unkind, to give a Lady Pain,
Who lost him thus reluctantly. ——— You watch
His first Return to Court, with Eye, too keen,
To be so coldly look'd at.

Eth.

Eth. Though he told me
 His Roof conceal'd a Witness of his Guilt,
 I took you for a Shadow. But, I perceive
 His Falshood may be trusted, when he speaks
 Of his own Baseness. — Think me not abrupt. —
 If Oaths had Power to bind, he shou'd be mine.
 Triumphant in the prosperous Pride of Beauty,
 Your easy Scorn insults the Miserable.
 Unconscious of their Anguish. — Sense of lost Peace,
 Perhaps, transported an afflicted Heart,
 And I appear'd too warm. —
 I shall no more invade your wish'd Repose;
 All I would ask is — Pardon the dreadful Question,
 Are you the Wife of *Athelwold*?

Elf. The Wife!

What Right of Claim could he presume, to *Me*,
 But what that Title gave him?

Eth. Farewel — for ever.

Kneel, and pray Heaven, to whose indulgent Hand
 You owe Attraction, to increase, and guard it;
 Else will your destin'd Ruin soon instruct you,
 That he, who, tempted by your Charms, betray'd
 His Heart's vow'd Mistress, and deceiv'd his King,
 Will, for some new Temptation, give up you,
 And leave you subject to another's Pity,
 As I am, now, to yours.

Elf. Stay, Madam, stay,
 You have alarm'd me, to my inmost Soul;
 And I adjure you, as you hope Return
 Of your departed Peace, not to go hence,
 Til you explain the fatal Mystery,
 Which your last Words were fill'd with. —

Eth. The Part I bear

In the black Meaning, my sad Soul determines
 To feel in Silence, till I shake it off,
 To Distance, whence it can return no more.
 — For you, the King, who sent this trusted Favourite,
 To court you to the Bed of Royal *Edgar*,
 Not that of *Athelwold*, — The King, thus wrong'd,
 Will punish your false Lover, with Revenge,

Which,

Which, amidst all my Agonies, I dread;
And tremble for *his* Woes, who has destroy'd me.

Elf. O my foreboding Heart! — A thousand Wonders,
A thousand Mysteries, at once reveal'd,
Come rushing on my Memory! — Now, *Athelwold*,
No longer is it doubtful to my Thought,
Why the King's Eye was judg'd more dangerous
Than Shoals, and Rocks, and Shipwrecks! — Now
the Mystery

Of Royal *Edgar's* Words, so lately heard,
Opens, unveil'd, upon my frightened Soul;
And Pain, and Terror, and Confusion, shake me.
Oh! cruel Undeceiver! why have you wak'd me:
Why have you torn me from my joyless Calm?
Which, though it gave no Transport, lull'd me in
Quiet,
And kept these Storms of Life from breaking on me.

Enter Lady.

La. Madam! — The King! —

Elf. What would'st thou say?

La. The King is entring here!

And my Lord with him. — Scarce had I Breath, to fly
Before, — and give you Notice.

Elf. Save him, kind Heaven! —

Teach me, some Angel, to avoid this King,
Teach my distracted Heart to 'scape this Precipice.
Which way may we retire? — Yon inmost Door
Opens upon the Gallery.

La. 'Tis lock'd, and they are here!

Ethel. Oh! the severe Resolve of righteous Heaven!
They come! — I tremble, for this false Man's Fate;
And my unwilling Feet are rooted here:

Enter Edgar, followed by Athelwold.

Ed. Why dost thou linger, *Athelwold*? — Look here!
The Secret thou would'st have withheld, yet longer,
Shines out, like the Sun's Heat, to gladden Nature,

D

And

And make Creation smile! ——— *Elfrid!* ——— my Queen!

Soul of my Kingdom's Hopes! my Fame! my Glory! Thou art his Gift! ——— Oh! let thy Angel-Tongue Join, to confirm my Vow, to this lov'd Friend!

This Friend, to whom I owe the sweet Surprize, That I thus gaze upon thee, thus approach thee! Lend me thy wish'd Consent, to firm this Oath, Which, by my Soul's eternal Hopes, I swear! That Day and Night shall cease, and Time be lost, And Nature's slack'ning Springs unwind the World, Ere I forget his Interest in my Heart, Or hold my *Athelwold* less dear than now.

Elf. Confirm his Oath, kind Heav'n!

Ed. Thou saint-like Goodness!

How shall my swelling Heart contain this Joy! This over-pow'ring Gladness! ——— Bless'd as I am, Center'd in Happiness, 'twixt Love and Friendship, I can look down on my neglected Throne, Can see the Pride of Power rise far beneath me; And Heaven has scarce reserv'd one Bliss to wish for. Oh! blind, blind Man! (*Exit disorder'd.*)

Elf. aside. Her ardent Sense of Wrongs Points at her Life, and Charity compels me To save her, from herself. (*Exit Elfrid.*)

Ethel. What mean their Looks? Signals of Terror, and disorder'd Partings! Why are they vanish'd thus? ——— Ha! By my Soul! Thou, too, art touch'd with the contagious Madness! Now has some Devil, malignant to thy Truth, Wrought to perplex thee. ——— No Part of Earth I govern, Dares cherish Mischief that could wound my Friend, With this quick Sense of Anguish!

Athel. Oh! that all Language Could be express'd by Looks! or that my King, Great Substitute of Heaven, could read my Heart, Like that first Power who made it!

Ed. What hast thou suffer'd? I think I should have said, what hast thou done? But that I speak to *Athelwold*.

Athel.

Athel. How base,
How like a Coward, fighting blind, is he,
Who dares commit the Crime he dares not own;
And, bold enough to know *himself* a Villain,
Fears, lest *Another* knows it!

Ed. Stop. — Say no more.

Art not thou *Athelwold*? Let me look on thee. —
No: — By thy sacred Empire, in my Heart,
It cannot be. — I am at Peace again.
Go on — thy Enemies, in vain, accus'd thee;
But thy own Words alarm'd me. — Yet, my glad
Eyes

Have trac'd thee over, and absolve that Form,
Even from the Power to harbour a mean Mind,
Unsuited and deceitful.

Athel. What can I say?

Guilt, when it meets Suspicion, or Reproach,
Sustains itself, within, and learns to balance
Offence, by Punishment. But where it finds
Compassion and has wrong'd a gen'rous Confidence,
It ought to blush, in Blood, and has no Way
To Pardon, or to Peace, but this — through Death.

Ed. *Disarming him.* Hold thy rash Hand — And, like my
Subject, learn,

To die, when I command thee. — Can it be possible
One, brave, as Thou art, shou'd have Guilt, to justify
This Fear of a Friend's Eye? — Is *Elfrid* mine?
Or, trusted with the Wants that press'd my Soul,
Hast thou, instead of giving, robb'd me of more,
And left thy Prince a Bankrupt? Unblest'd by Love,
And yet depriv'd of Friendship!

Athel. What has not Love

Made Honour guilty of! — Turn, Royal Sir,
Turn your Eyes inward, and, in *Emma's* Tears,
Read the too fatal Power of *Elfrid's* Beauty.
How cou'd weak *Athelwold* expect to conquer,
Where god-like *Edgar* fell!

Ed. Heav'n! 'tis Thy Hand,
When Subjects, thus, from Prince's Crimes, grow bold
To charge their Treasons on their King's Example,
And shame us into Justice! — True, I have err'd;

But mark, what Difference 'twixt my Guilt, and that
 Which thou nor dar'st to speak, nor I to hear.
 By *Elfrid* won, from *Emma*; Love, in me,
 Prov'd but too strong for Love. In thee, not Love,
 To Love was treacherous. — But Love, to Honour,
 To Friendship, Loyalty, to sworn Obedience;
 To all the violated Laws of Life! —
 What Subject, though unfavour'd, dares invade
 His Sovereign's Claim? — But, when that Subject is
 A Servant too bound by the double Tie,
 Of Duty and Allegiance; when, beyond all,
 His King, his Master, whom he wrongs, selected him,
 Treasur'd his Hopes and Wishes, in his Heart;
 Liv'd in his Breast; partial but in *his* Cause;
 And, against warring Worlds, wou'd have defended
 him!
 What can that faithless Traitor's Reason urge,
 To match his Guilt, with mine?

Enter Elfrid hastily.

Elf. Oh! — *Athelwold!*

The injur'd Stranger, strong by Despair's wild Rage,
 Breaks, like a Tempest, from your Servant's Care,
 And meditates Destruction. No Voice but yours
 Will calm her into Patience, — In her Heart's Anguish,
 She calls on *Athelwold*, till Shrieks of Woe
 Echo, from Tower to Tower, your fatal Name,
 And the wide Castle rings with her Reproaches.

Ed. Go — and appease her Grief, thou Source of
 Sorrow!

Free my dim'd Eyes from aching at thy Presence,
 And leave me to the Pain of sharp Reflection,
 What thou should'st suffer, from a Prince's Hand,
 Who is this Wretch, by thine! (*Exit Athelwold.*)

Too fatal Beauty!

Why have I found thee, but to lose thee more,
 And change a painful Hope, for certain Misery!

Elf. If, in your royal Heart, I hold such Influence,
 Abate your Wonder at my Power in *Athelwold's*.

Why

Why were you Friends, but that your Souls had Sympathy,

And purpos'd, each like other?—'Tis scarce a Moment,
Since I first learn'd, that when he press'd his Passion,
He wrong'd his Sovereign's Meaning: Yet, already,
I find the Fault most yours—Love is a Leveller,
And all Degrees are equall'd, where he reigns.
Why was another sent, if *Edgar* lov'd me?

Why was not *Cornwall* honour'd by your Presence,
When your unnumber'd Navy swept her Coasts,
In your last Guardian Circuit?—Had you then landed,
Indulgent to my loyal Father's Prayer,
From what a dreadful Length of destin'd Woe,
Had my sad Heart been guarded!

Ed. I saw thee, first,

Unknowing thou wer't *Elfrid*, at the dread Altar,
Where, from our awful *Dunstan's* holy Hands,
The consecrated Oil confirm'd me King.—
How wer't thou lost, so soon?

Elf. Swear but to pardon

The gen'rous, tho' unfaithful; *Athelwold*,
And I will shew you, we were doom'd unhappy,
But by the will of Heaven.

Ed. Kings shou'd be just:

And such compulsive Oaths, too lightly sworn,
Make that Necessity, which might be Choice,
And strip the Grace from Mercy.

Elf. Then hear my Vow:

Since you decline to bind your doubtful Will,
Thus, on my Knees, all powerful Heav'n! my Soul
Appeals thy righteous Throne.—Hear,—and afflict me
With every woful Curse thy Wrath has stor'd
For Perjury, if ever I consent

To quit the Breast, or Claim of *Athelwold*.

Or, should he fall, by your revenging Hand,

If I not shun, for ever, even to Death,

The Sight, the Voice, the Name of Royal *Edgar*.

Ed. Cruel, cold, proud, dildainful,—glorious *Elfrid*!
What has thy Rashness sworn?—Yet, let me perish,
If to have sworn it, has not made thy Loveliness

As awful as Divinity!—Was ever
Distress thus hopeless? Could your untouch'd Heart
Have sense of what mine suffers, you wou'd have fear'd
To wound me, with this Pain of fix'd Despair.

Elf. Now, shielded by the Safeguard of my Oath,
Virtue may speak, secure, and own its Weakness:
There was a Time, e'er *Athelwold* was mine,
When, to have been the Wife of uncrown'd *Edgar*,
Wou'd have been, more than Monarchy, to *Ethrid*.—
Fatally curious, from the deep Impression
Of an alarming Dream, I saw you crown'd,
Hid in a clam'rous Press, that shouted round me,
And shook the sacred Dome, with Peals of Joy.

Ed. Oh! tell it me again. — Was I to bleis'd,
That you then thought with Tenderness on *Edgar*?
What was that Dream? Charm me, thou rising Wonder,
With each soft Circumstance of pleasing Pain;
For, while I die, with Terror of my Fate,
*Tis Heav'n to hear it, from a Voice like thine.

Elf. Oh! sooth not Misery, — Forbear to speak
With this untimely; this forbidden, Softness!
Aw'd, by Rememb'rance of my dreadful Dream,
I tremble, ign'rant of the Will of Heaven,
Too dimly gleam'd upon my distant Soul.
I dreamt I sat, and saw th' Imperial Crown
Plac'd on your sacred Head: Your Form the same,
As when I, after view'd you at the Altar,
And, tainting with Reflection, left the Throng!
Soon as the Diadem adorn'd your Brow,
You turn'd, methought, with Brightness more than
mortal.

Held it presented thus; and, high in Air,
Stept to the Seat that bore me! When strait a cold,
A shadowy Hand divided us. Loud shrieks
Rung thro' the Temple: The gay Pomp was darken'd,
And a broad Sea of Blood rose high, between us,
And bore us from each other.

Ed. Thy ominous Dream
Creeps, in cold Tides, and curdles all my Veins,
Seek we, thou lost Inflamer of Desire,

The false, the fated *Athelwold*.— My Heart
Heaves with unusual Bodings. Powerful Pity
Struggles with Justice; and 'tis more painful to me,
To think, my Friend, should fall, to need Forgiveness,
Than to forgive my *Enemy*.

Elf. This is, indeed,
To reign! So reigns the World's supreme Disposer.
All Things, but one, are subject to his Power;
But even his Pow'r itself, obeys his Mercy.
Proud of Dominion, yet enslav'd to Fear,
Kings who love Blood, thro' one long Tempest steer,
While the calm Monarch, who with Smiles controuls,
Roots his safe Empire and is King of Souls.

Ed. When Woman, form'd to soften Man to Peace,
Fans his Disquiet, and gives Care Increase,
Love is a Weakness, and to wish in vain,
Were a forc'd Freedom, and Escape from Pain:
But where our Hearts are charm'd, by Forms like thee,
Where Passions sympathize, and Souls agree,
There to love hopeless, is, in Life, to die.
And, languid, in void Blanks of Being, lie.

A C T V.

S C E N E, *The Garden.*

Ethelinda, alone.

Ethel. O H! Shame! Why keep'st thou this alarming
Distance?

Cruelly kind, press inward, on my Heart;
But fright not *Reason*, cling not to my *Thought*,
Blot, blot Remembrance out, strike Home at Life,

D 4

Four,

Pour, all at once, Oblivion on my Soul,
And quench me, into Quiet.

Enter Athelwold.

Athel. Madam, ———

Ethel. Murderer! ———

Athel. I come. ———

Ethel. How dar'st thou?

Athel. I would find a Voice

To tell thee, I cou'd die, to bring thee Comfort.

Ethel. Comfort from thee! —False Man! till *thou*
wer't base

I never wanted Comfort. —

Till my wrong'd Heart had Weakness, to believe,

And *share* the Pains I gave, I knew no Grief:

Honour, and Peace, and Innocence were mine:

I never felt a Wish, that was my own,

Or Woe, but for another. — Now, thou seest me

Shun'd, hopeless, blasted, infamous, and scorn'd;

Cut off from every social Joy of Life;

Pitied by others, hated by myself,

Forfaken even by thee, for whose sole sake.

All other Joys forsook me! — Yet thou dar'st

Insult my murder'd Peace; and, proudly charitable

Feed famish'd Hope with the cold Alms of Pity!

Athel. Be Witness for me, That all-dreaded Power,

Who made my tortur'd Heart, and knows it best,

Till *Eifrid's* fatal Beauty forc'd my Will,

I never had a Wish, beyond thy Love.

My Hopes dwelt on thee, and my doating Soul

Drew Taste and Purpose from thee. At thy Voice

Awaken'd Life leapt, list'ning, to my Ear,

And I became all Eye, whene'er I saw thee.

Thou wer't Possession and Desire, combin'd,

All that Ambition wish'd, or Fancy form'd:

With thee there was no Grief, no Joy without thee.

Ethel. Inhuman Flatt'ry all! and Smiling Murder!

The barb'rous Elegance of Man's soft Art,

To cheat believing Innocence! — E'er long

Thy

Thy *Elfrid*, the resistless Charmer! — She!
Will bear thee poorly urge the same Excuse,
When some third Fool believes thee.

Athel. Wou'd kind Fate
Point my lost Heart a Way to proye its Pain,
What wou'd I not, with Transport, suffer for thee,
To ease the Woes I gave?

Ethel. One Way there is,
And Love, and Honour point it. But have a Care;
Refuse not to my kindled Hope its Claim;
Lest in my half-hush'd Bosom, thou should'st rouse
New Swarms of torturing Mischiefs, whose dire Stings
Will drive us both to Madness.

Athel. Name it to me,
And if I not obey the wish'd Command,
Think me, indeed, the Wretch thy Anger paints me.

Ethel. Redeem me from the Shame I suffer for thee;
For sake this Woman, who usurps my Right,
And do a noble Justice, to my Love,
And thy own injur'd Honour.

Athel. She's my Wife.
The Law's firm Knot has bound her mine, for ever.

Ethel. Thy Wife! — O patient Heaven! What less
am I?

Did not, I, first, receive the plighted Vow?
Did not I fondly trust th' affianc'd Faith
Of nuptial Contract? — If to join her Hand,
In Breach of Oaths that bound thy Soul, to mine,
Firms her thy Wife, and sets aside my Claim,
So sacred, and so sworn! — Then, solid Rights
Are Shadows; and the empty Forms of Time
Take Place of Truth, and Reason.

Athel. 'Twill not be. —
My Soul is torn with a vain War of Passions:
Honour, and Shame, and Grief, and gen'rous Pity,
Desire perplex'd, and strong divided Will,
To doat for ever on the Guilt I hate,
And shun the Worth that charms me! — Righteous
Heaven!

Look down on *Ethelinda*! Revenge her Wrongs,

De

Do her that Justice, which in vain I wish her;
 Curse this despairing Wretch, who cannot bless her,
 And dart thy blastful Light'nings, on a Flame
 No earthly Fire can conquer. — I am a Traitor;
 A mean abandon'd Starter from my Faith;
 A false forsworn Deceiver! — Give me thy Pity;
 And, if thou can'st have Goodness so extreme,
 Refuse me not thy Pardon. — But for Love! —
 Alas! forget it. — Fly me, — hate me, — fear me, —
 Oh! share not in the Misery I am doom'd to;
 Join not thy Virtue to a Fate so curs'd,
 So fall'n, beyond the Reach of lost Relief,
 As the unhoping *Athelwold's*.

Ethel. I thank thee:

Thou hast awaken'd me, to feel Heaven's Justice; —
 But, now, so low, so poor, dost thou appear
 To my returning Reason, that I hate not
 My Guilt itself more bitterly than thee,
 Or than my own weak Heart, for having lov'd thee!
 What Woman e'er shall live, belov'd, and flatter'd;
 Yet, timely, wise enough to think it possible,
 That one, she sees, and hears, as thou *hast been*,
 She ever can behold, as thou *art now*!
 Inhuman Sex! who smile us into Ruin!
 And love us into Infamy! — Begone —
 Fear for thy self: Kneel, pray, solicit Heav'n,
 Think not of me, or *my* Afflictions, more;
 But, by Repentance, wash away the Stains
 From thy own perjur'd Soul, lest my shock'd Spirit,
 When it meets thine, in a less guilty World,
 Renews its Pangs, ev'n there, to see thee tortur'd,
 Beyond my Pow'r to bear, tho' doom'd, for me.

(Exit in Disorder.)

Athel. alone) She's gone! — and I am left, to walk
 the World,

Like a pale Shade, that shuns the Paths of Men.
 Light searches me too deep. — My conscious Soul
 Starts inward, and escapes the Eye of Day.

Oh! Bo'm Peace, now lost — Were there, in Guilt,
 No Weight more painful, than this Low'r of Brow.

This

This eye-dejecting Sense of infelt Shame!
Yet shun it, all, you, who have Hearts like Men,
That you may raise the Front, and look like Virtue.

I hate myself, beyond the Taste of Hope.
Why live I then? There is a Gloom, in Death,
Will hide me from my Thoughts: — Yet, weigh that
well;

Shou'd I die now, 'twou'd seem Despair, not Justice:
'Twou'd look like shrinking from a Sense of Pain;
Like wanting Strength, myself, to cope with Scorn;
Yet meanly leaving it to a wrong'd Woman.

O *Ethelinda*! — What a Slave am I!
Thus to have kill'd thee, with Disgrace and Ruin,
Who never had'st a Stain on thy white Soul,
But one, thy Pity for thy Murderer gave thee?

For whom became I this black Wretch? — For
Elfrid! —

Her! who already scorns my Traitor Flame,
And burns, to the King's Wishes! — Why staid she
with him?

What cou'd she hear? what say, in that nice Juncture!
Hell to my Heart! Into what reptile Poorness
Does a Man creep, who dares not see his Shame? —
Whole Crimes compel him to be dumb, when wrong'd,
Because Complaint is only due to Innocence!

{ Throws himself on the Earth. }

Enter Edgar, and Elfrid.

Ed. Athelwold! I was once thy Friend, and thought
thee

The Wealth of a King's Heart. I trusted thee,
And was deceiv'd. Thou! in whose Breast I lodg'd
My Hopes of Peace, hast let in Misery on me!
What shall I do, to save insulted Majesty
From the Contempt of Weakness? — Yet convince
thee,

That I can bid my Pity be thy Punishment.

Elf. Alas! my gracious Sovereign, wound him not
With too severe Reproach, whom your great Soul
Determines

Determines to receive to unhop'd Mercy.

—The King, my Lord! too gen'rous to revenge
The Lover's Falshood, on the Subject's Faith,
In kind Rememb'rance of your Virtue's Strength,
Forgers your am'rous Weakness.—'Twere too much
For gaining *me*, to lose a Monarch's Love.

Athel. No—Madam! — I am fall'n, beneath your
Favour. —

Kings,—*born* to think supremely, know 'tis Glory
To rise, above Revenge. —But you, who thus
Can speak, and look, the Queen you are not, yet
Must find it difficult to pardon Guilt,
That robs you of your Royalty.

Elf. My Lord!

That jealous Brow, and those reproachful Accents,
Wrong the good Meaning of a Heart that loves you.

Ed. Shame on thy Blindness, arrogant Mistaker!
So cold to Sense of thy own Guilt! so warm
To charge another's Innocence! ——— *Her Prayer*
First won me from my Anger. — For *her* Sake,
I force my struggling Soul to mean thee Pardon.
But take it, with Condition. — Take it, thus,

(*Gives him his Sword.*)

And heedfully remark it. If, henceforth
Thou dar'st aspire to *Elfrid*, call her thine,
Or talk, or think, or dream of thy bold Claim,
Thou shalt not live an Hour. — Till then, breathe on
The Infamy of thy disloyal Act:
Is Vengeance, as severe as I can wish thee.

Athel. Oh Sir! resume a Gift, I cannot stoop
To hold, on such Conditions. Death wou'd bless me,
'Tis what I wish, and merit. I deserve
All Punishments, but Life, with Loss of *Elfrid*.

Elf. Shock'd, and unworthy a Debate, like this,
I should be still less worthy, cou'd I hear it,

Unconscious of the Wound it gives my Honour,

—— Oh! Thou Eternal Ruler of the World!

Here, by thy dreadful Name, I kneel and swear

I will be neither *Athelwold's* nor *Edgar's*, ———

Safe at thy Altar's consecrated Foot,

In some still Convent's solitary Gloom,
Awful Religion shall benight my Eyes,
And hide me from the World. — There will I weep,
And wish my self forgotten.

Edg. Oh! — recal,
Explain, or limit, the too hasty Vow,
Thou mean'st but to retire, 'till I am dead,
Or till his Death who wrong'd thee.

Elf. Shou'd he fall
For me, may Heav'n refuse my parting Soul,
If I not keep my Vow, unbroke for ever!

Edg. Hear this — and blush at thy base Jealousy,
Thou blind Profaner! *(A Shriek without.)*

Elf. That alarming Shriek
Rings to my trembling Heart, and wakes its Fear
For one, more wretched yet, — more lost than I. —
(Exit hastily, and Athelwold is following.)

Edg. Athelwold! — Come back.

Ath. A Curse on Guilt;
It sinks the Brave to Cowards! — It was, once,
My Heart's proud Joy, to meet my Sovereign's Eye.
'Tis, now, my Soul's worst Torment, — Hide me, Earth,
From *Edgar's* angry Brow: From my own Shame,
Not Death itself can hide me.

Edg. I have bethought me,
That Love and Fate deny, we both should live;
The Heart of *Elfrid*, when thou art no more,
May teach her to forget thee. — I, or Thou
Must fall. — It was the King's Intent to pardon
The Subject's Treason. The King does forgive thee;
But the *Friend* cannot pardon. — Let us, then,
On equal Terms, dispute our doubtful Claim,
To Death and Quiet, or to Life and *Elfrid*.
Here I renounce Distinction, give Allegiance
To the wild Winds, as thou hast done before,
And seek an Equal's Vengeance for my Wrongs, *(Draws.)*
— I know that I descend, and that the Throne
Disdains a Subject Foe. But I disclaim
That cold Prerogative of a King's Safety;
To teach thee that I need no borrow'd Power:

Myself

Myself the Guardian of my injur'd Honour,
Myself my Strength, when my false Friend betrays me.

Athel. kneeling) O gen'rous Edgar! my Imperial Master,

Whose Spirit reigns, distinguish'd among Souls,
As among Kings, thy Person; think me not,
How plung'd soever in the Guilt of Falshood,
So lost to Sense of the unmeasur'd Distance,
Between my Prince and me, to dare defend
One aching Atom of this hated Breast,
Against a Wound he wishes me.—No; take

(Lays his Sword at the King's Feet.

My Sword.—— It has been drawn, with some Success

In your lov'd Cause; direct it to the Heart
Of this new Traitor. At your sacred Feet,
Thetainted Blood will flow, with willing Waste,
And wash away the Mem'ry of his Crime,
Who lives too long, when he not lives for you.

Edg. Rise, and provoke me, if thou would'st be kind,

By some wish'd Mark of Arrogance.—Presume,
Talk insolently of thy Worth; defy me;
Smile at my Sword's rais'd Point; threaten,——accuse,——

Deny,—Calumniate.—Any Thing, but this!
Spare this soft Sorrow, hide this sweet Humility,
And I shall keep my Purpose,—O *Athelwold*!
Why hast thou pain'd my Soul, with this sharp Conflict?

Why hast thou wrong'd me, into Will to hurt thee?

(Throws down his Sword.

Athel. How ill shou'd I deserve your unwish'd Mercy,
Did not my Life become more odious to me
Than was the Guilt I fall for!—From my Birth,
With fix'd, unalterable, deadly Hate,
I punish'd faithless Rebels. Trust me now,
Against myself. My Sovereign shall not need
Revenge his Wrongs, on *Athelwold*.—— One Pray'r
Has Boldness, yet, to urge your royal Ear;

Then,

Then, I have done with Wishes, and the World.—
Prince *Leolyn*, whom I have made unhappy,
Now suffers, for my Guilt. So greatly wrong'd,
I shall not rest, in Death, till your try'd Goodness
Permits his Freedom, and bestows on Him
My forfeit Honours, and the Lands I leave.

Edg. I charge thee, as thy Heart wou'd wish my Par-
don

Attempt not on thy Life. Wait, and expect
Thy Doom, from the slow Workings of my Soul,
That labours to resolve, but knows not how;
For *Leolyn*, thy gen'rous Wish has mov'd me.
Go——bring him to my Presence.—— I will
walk,

And meditate, alone, till thy Return.

(Exit Athelwold.)

Edgar alone.

How shall I move, in this dark Maze of Passion!
'Tis true, my Favourite has betray'd me, basely;
But he was first, himself, betray'd by Love;
That Tyrant of the Heart, more King than I,
Ranks Monarchs with his Slaves.—— Let me weigh
Athelwold

By my own Wishes, and, then, punish him,
When I can see, unmov'd, those Eyes which charm'd
him.

How shall I act? at once, to shield my Fame,
And satisfy my Love. — Cou'd Reason's Force
Tear the unlicens'd Image from my Heart,
Or patient, leave to Time, th' unbatten'd Means,
To bless my fierce Desires; Who knows what Chance,
Or Death, or Thought, or Woman's changeful Will,
Or my own conquer'd Wishes, may produce.

—— Kings should, however injur'd, do no Wrong:
They cannot err *alone*, since what they act,
They authorize in others. — Let me, then,
Extinguish low Desires, lest, at my Flame,
I light a Nation's Wishes. — I will strive
To check this rising Passion, and forget
That she who charms me thus is in my Power,
Till I can bend that Pow'r, to Reason's Rule. — They

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— They come! — I will avoid them, — and reflect
What Measures to resolve on. (Exit Edgar.

Re-enter Athelwold, follow'd by Leolyn.

Leol. Turn — whither would'st thou lead me?

Ath. In this Place,

But now, I left the King. — A little farther,
And we shall find him, soon.

Leol. Stay — for we find,
In these provided Swords what well reminds us
Of our late Parting. — Thou hast perform'd thy Promise,
With Bravery so noble, that, again,
'Spite of my burning Wrongs, I almost love thee.
—— It cannot need, that I shou'd spur thy Will,
To what remains unfinish'd. (Taking up a Sword.

Ath. I had forgot it.

Guilt, and Repentance, and the Tears of Shame,
Had wash'd the Indignation from my Heart.

—— Methinks we were not born for Enemies:
Enough already have we wrong'd our Friendship.
Let us be Foes no more.

Leol. First, perish, *Leolyn.*

Didst thou not blast my Honour by a Blow?
Fir'd with a Russian's Boldness, strike a Prince!
And can he live to pardon? — Shame to thy Heart,
Or give my Glory the Revenge it claims,
Or I will brand thee with a Coward's Marks,
And teach light Boys to scorn thee.

Ath. If it must be,

Spare me a Moment's Pause — 'Twill soon be past,
And Death will want no Time to sate his Purpose.
—— What shall I do? — To trust him with my Softness,
To tell him what, at my Request, the King
Was won to grant him, were to seem afraid,
And shrink from his Revenge. — O fatal Chain
Of long depending Woes, that Guilt is bound to!
Conflicting Passions blast the bad Man's Hopes,
And all his Thoughts are Whirlwind! —

Leol. Come on. — — —

Thy

Thy Blow burns hot, and I will wait no longer.

Ath. Hold — *Leolyn!* Be slow. — The Chance of Conquest

Is various, and unknown — and, shou'd I fall,
Thou wilt have Cause to grieve, thou dost not hear me.

Leol. Never — till Vengeance has been paid its Full,
Never will I grow tame, and hear thee more.

Ath. (*taking up the other Sword.*) Take thy own Way then.
— Let Destruction fall,

And find thee without Shelter. — But see, the King,
His coming — (*in this Place*) prevents our Purpose,
On, to th' appointed Terras. — Follow me.

(*Exeunt together.*)

Re-enter Edgar, with an Officer.

Edg. What *Oswald* told me, of a second Quarrel,
Renews my Anger against *Leolyn*,
And wakes me into Fear of some new Consequence,
From his Enlargement. — Take a Guard, and bring him;
To answer this Presumption. — (*Exit Officer.*)

Enter Oswald.

Osw. Oh, Sir! Unhappy *Ethelinda* rests;
Her Sorrows are no more.

Edg. What has Fate done?

Osw. See, Sir! yon Terras, which o'erhangs the Sea!
Thence, falling steep at once, the frighted Eye
Akes, down a Depth of Rocks, to reach the Surge,
That breaks, unheard below! — There walking swift,
With frantick Action, in a long, loud, Speech,
The poor distress'd Complainer talk'd, and wept
To the wild Ocean; told the Waves her Woes;
And, list'ning, earnest, oft, in dumb Suspence,
Paus'd for an Answer: — 'Till, at last, more shrill,
She scream'd Resentment, to the distant Deep.

— Thou art, she cry'd, as cold, and deaf, as *Athelwold*.
Then sudden, from her Breast, in rash Despair,
Snatching a Dagger, — She, with all the Rage

E

Of

And, for a Moment, stop! Her flying Soul.
Twice, at his Voice, she stretch'd her dying Eyes,
And gasp'd, — and struggl'd, — and wou'd fain have
spoke;

But, failing — in a short, convulsive Sigh,
Breath'd out her Soul, — and sunk upon his Bosom,
He! — standing near the Downfal of the Cliff,
Strain'd her, with Rapture, in his circling Arms,
O *Leolyn*! he cry'd, forgive me, *now*:
Tell the wrong'd King, I leave his *Elfrid*, free,
And, thus, too late, do Right to *Ethelinda* —
Then, springing furious, o'er the dreadful Rock,
Leap'd, with the Dead, to Death! — Together, both
Fell, frightful, to the Deep; which, closing o'er them,
Yei's them from Sense of Woe, in Rest, for ever.

Ed. Great was his Guilt, and *greatly* 'tis aton'd!
Nothing is safe, but Innocence! — Be it your Care
To send out Boats, that their recover'd Bodies
May rest, beneath one Marble; over which
I will erect a Cloister, and endow it,
For hourly Prayers to Heaven, to rest their Souls.
— Haste, all! and watch th' afflicted *Elfrid*, near,
Assist her, — guard her, — wait, at her Apartment,
And save her, from her Sorrow. —

Oh! *Leolyn*, be obstinately just;
Indulge no Passion, and deceive no Trust:
Let never Man be bold enough, to say,
Thus, and no farther, shall my Passion stray;
The first Crime, past, compells us into more,
And Guilt grows *Fate*, that was but *Choice*, before.

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